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Sherwood Anderson's philosophy of life as shown by the action of characters in his novels

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SHERWOOD ANDERSON'S PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE AS SHOWN BY THE ACTION OF CHARACTERS IN HIS NOVELS

by

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The work of any writer, and for that matter of any artist in any of the seven arts, should contain within it the story of his own life.

--Sherwood Anderson
("A Writer's Concept of Realism")

There is a song in the pencil that is held in my cunning fingers. Out--out--out--dear words. The words have saved me. There is a rhythm in the pencil. It sings and swings. It sings a great song. It is singing the song of my life. It is bringing life into me, into my close place. . . . By the running of the pencil over the white paper I have made myself pure.

--Sherwood Anderson
(Mid-American Chants)

P R E F A C E

> Something a bit queer has happened to man. The age has moved too fast for him. . . .The machine has taken from us the work of our hands.[1]

ABOUT THE TIME that the civilized countries of the world were fearfully watching the prelude to the first World War, another conflict also was in the making--a war of ideas in the field of American literature that opened with what has been termed the "Battle of the Village" and which grew out of that into a victory for Naturalism and the loosely-termed "Modern Movement" in literature and art.

America had, by 1915, in the space of a few decades become suddenly a strong and powerful industrial giant--a tall, awkward giant suffering with growing pains--terribly strong, but even more terribly immature. America had discovered a new way of living, but not a new way of life. America was speeding toward the future with one foot in a Ford car, but it could not lift the other from the buggy. The old order of individualism and craftsmanship had given way to the new order of standardization, and with the change came a new way of thought and life that also was becoming

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1 Sherwood Anderson, Puzzled America (New York: Horace Liveright, Incorporated, 1931), p.41.

standardized. And as a physical revolution swelled and burst into the chaos of the first World War, so realistic novelists, journalists, muckrakers, and historians raised their voices to expose the fruits of modern civilization with sharp and penetrating criticism.

Among these writers was Sherwood Anderson, one who saw what was happening to America:

> Already the giant that was to be king in the place of the old kings was calling his servants and his armies to serve him. He used the methods of old kings and promised his followers booty and gain. . . . And all over the country, in the towns, the farm houses, and the growing cities of the new country, people stirred and awakened. Thought and poetry died or passed as a heritage to feeble fawning men who also became servants of the new order.[2]

In his concern, Anderson harped on variations of this theme, repeating it in all of his works: "The factory came and swept the individual workman aside and with him went much of the old workman's feeling toward tools and materials." Not only did Anderson see a danger in the loss of pride in craftsmanship among the workers, he also saw it destroying the integrity of the workman in prose who, Anderson writes, "wants also to live on the same expensive scale of the banker or broker." He wondered also about the problem of love and marriage. He was deeply concerned with the attitude of writers and the public alike toward the treatment of sex in life and its reflection

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2 Sherwood Anderson, Poor White (New York: B.W. Heubsch, Incorporated, 1920), pp. 63-64.

in literature. A statement in the "Easy Chair" section of Harper's Magazine particularly offended him, and his answer was typical of his general reaction. The statement was, Anderson wrote in his Memoirs,

> something to the effect that a writer should present to the public only what he called the more cheerful aspects of our common existence! . . . My own experiences in living has already taught me that sex was a tremendous force in life. It twisted people, beat upon them, often distracted and destroyed their lives . . . Why hesitate to put down whatever is in men's and women's lives, making the picture whole?[3]

Anderson brooded on the problem of man's adjustment to other men and women, he sought for the re-establishment of man's dignity and worth in an age in which the machine was replacing man's usefulness to society. With a fertile imagination coupled with sensitivity and tempered with insight, Anderson felt the restlessness growing in the lives of men and women, symptoms of which were expressed in individual revolt by writers against customs and morals outmoded by a new age, writers who began to set down what they observed and felt, writers who recorded with fidelity life in which situations could not always be depended upon to fit into the conventional Victorian story book pattern of a moral and happy ending.

Anderson, too, began to write. "It was," he tells us, "a little tale of something seen or felt, something remembered out of my experience of people." Restless, dissatisfied, he

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3 Sherwood Anderson, Memoirs (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1942), p. 212. The statement was credited by

had become, unwillingly, that epitome of the new age in America: a successful middle-aged business man. He had married and was the father of four children. He had a steady income, a home and a business. "But was it necessary to have money? To spend a life trying to grow rich? What was to be gained?"[4] These were questions he kept asking himself, and they gave him no peace. He, like his father, was by inclination a daydreamer, a storyteller. He could not measure life by dollars and cents, nor regulate his hours by the clock; he could not find that quality in him to remain a dutiful father and a business man. The most significant event in his life was the day he suddenly walked out of his paint factory and into a new life. He began his search for the answers to his questions; at the age of forty he became a story teller.

In each of his stories Anderson is concerned with problems of life. Alfred Adler has defined the "three major problems of life" as: The problem of profession and occupation; the solution of the question of man's social responsibilities; and the problem of love and marriage.[5] The purpose of this

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4 Ibid., p. 117.

5 Alfred Adler, Understanding Human Nature (New York: Garden City Publishing Company, 1927), pp. 239-40. These three problems summarized are to be found in Poor White, where Anderson wrote of Hugh McVey, his central character: ". . .he knew what he wanted. He wanted men and women and close association with men and women. Often his problem was yet more simple. He wanted a woman, one who would love him and lie close to him at night. He wanted the respect of his fellows in the town where he had come to live his life." (p. 362)

thesis shall be to examine each of these problems in the novels of Sherwood Anderson and, by reference to the author's autobiographies and his other writings, to evaluate the degree to which these problems are Anderson's own problems which he attempted to solve by transferring them to the characters in his books.

The opening chapter of this thesis will give briefly the background of literature of the opening period of the twentieth century before introducing the writers of the naturalistic school, whose voices were heard in force by a public more sympathetic to their views following the end of the war; to show that Sherwood Anderson was among those who joined the revolt from the romantic, "glad" school of writers, a revolt which precipitated the "Battle of the Village;" and, finally, to show the change in taste and type of fiction which paved the way for encouragement and acceptance of the naturalistic school of writers and the Modern Movement. Chapter Two will treat of his "search for salvation;" his background, his purpose in becoming a writer; the reasons for his sudden surrender to the urge to write, a capitulation made at the expense of his home, family, and business at a time when he could look forward to a prosperous career. The next three chapters will treat in detail the three major problems that Mr. Anderson faced, burdens which he shifted to the characters in his novels.

Chapter Six will summarize these problems--briefly, because conclusions have been drawn at the end of each chapter and in many of the chapter sections as well--and will attempt to show that although Anderson failed to arrive at satisfactory solutions for his problems or to find an adequate philosophy of life, his "philosophy of failure" justified his purpose in writing. Sherwood Anderson's strength lay in his recognition that too much of modern writing was objective, and in his subjective style, his search for the disguised facts about modern life and his penetrating analysis of what was wrong about that life, he stood, as one critic summarizes, "shoulder to shoulder with the best of his contemporaries the world over."[6] Sherwood Anderson stated human problems validly, but his weakness lay in the fact that once having stated them, he could not find the answers for himself, and because of this, his characters reflected this confusion.

Confusion is one of the keynotes in an analysis of either his life or of his writings. "I am a confused child in a confused world," he wrote in his Mid-American Chants,[7] but, as Alyse Gregory aptly pointed out, "it is not from

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6 Cleveland B. Chase, Sherwood Anderson (New York: McBride and Company, 1927), p. 12.

7 Sherwood Anderson, Mid-American Chants (New York: John Lane Company, 1918), p. 13.

confused children, however engaging they may be, that one looks for art."[8] Why is it, then, that Anderson, whose writings have been branded awkward, inarticulate, cheap soft sentimentalism, distasteful, unconvincing--to name but a few charges--and valid charges at that--at the same time is hailed even by some of the same critics as one "who taps on occasions deeper veins than almost any other of our contemporary novelists,"[9] and as "one of the most thoroughly and integrally American writers who have ever existed"?[10] This question forms the theme of the last section of this thesis, a study of a man who kept writing little tales of people, who put them through experiences he himself had been through; who, as he tells us, kept trying to think his way through his own muddle.

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8 Alyse Gregory, "Sherwood Anderson," The Dial, LXXV (September, 1923), pp. 245-46. The quotation is certainly apt when applied to Sherwood Anderson, but, of course, it was taken out of context. Anderson's words, from a poem, "Chicago", were applied to the city, not to himself. The opening line of this poem reads "I am mature, a man child, in America, in the West . . ." etc.

9 Chase, op. cit., p. 246.

10 Ibid., p. 83.

CHAPTER I

An Introduction to the Literary Background Of the Twentieth Century

> To me it seems that as writers we shall have to throw ourselves with greater daring into life. We shall have to begin to write out of the people and not for the people. We shall have to find within ourselves a little of that courage. . . . We shall, I am sure, have much crude blundering American writing before the gift of beauty and subtlety in prose shall honestly belong to us.[1]

IN ORDER TO GET a proper perspective on the writings of Sherwood Anderson, it is necessary to view briefly the literary background of the decades preceding the twentieth century. The dominant force in American literature during the first three quarters of the nineteenth century was, of course, romanticism, to be followed by realism, which in turn paved the way in the twentieth century for the acceptance of naturalism by the reading public.

The trend of American thought before the Civil War encouraged every man to believe himself the master of his own actions. In a sparsely settled continent, with large areas of undeveloped land awaiting settlement by any adven-

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1 Sherwood Anderson, "An Apology for Crudity." Sherwood Anderson's Notebook (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1926), pp. 197 and 200.

turesome or hardy soul who chose to stake a claim, dependent for the most part upon his own ability to provide for himself the necessities of life, man felt himself a free agent. Romanticism was reflected in high idealism and the life of the spirit. With the coming of industrialism, of commerce and finance and big business, industry stood for monetary profit, material progress, and the rule of common sense and expediency.[2] With the growth of science, of new inventions, and with the rise of machine labor and the spread of technology, industrialism swept aside the era of the romantic period. It meant, in literature, a complete reversal of thought, "a complete break with the methods of our early romanticists, all of whom assumed in their fiction the same grandiose attitude that characterized our national life during the first half of the nineteenth century." The romanticist was imaginative rather than truthful; the true, if unpleasant, served only as an obstacle over which the hero would vault to final victory.[3]

It has been said that "no poet can chant his verses with ringing assurance who does not feel behind him the moral support of his age, or at least of a living and articulate element of that age."[4] It is perhaps this fact more

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2 Russell Blankenship, American Literature (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1931), p. 392.

3 Ibid., p. 477.

than any other that caused Ed W. Howe's great novel, The Story of a Country Town, which has been not unjustly called "a work that trembles on the brink of a greatness comparable to that of Huckleberry Finn and Moby Dick,"[5] to be rejected in 1883 by a reading public whose literary taste had been cloyed by lighter and more frothy fare, just as Moby Dick was not appreciated for almost seventy years until the Melville renaissance in 1919 brought its qualities to light. Ed Howe's story, "the first strong note of that long and bitter revolt from the American village,"[6] and its predecessor, The Hoosier Schoolmaster, written in 1871 by Edward Eggleston, were pioneer examples of realism seasoned with naturalism, but both were at least thirty years ahead of their time as far as a favorable reception by the reading public was concerned.

One reason why Howe and Eggleston could serve only as distant forerunners of a new era in literature was that they wrote in a period that marked a low point not only in literature and architecture, but also in moral values. While of course political graft and business chicanery were no discovery or sole property of the decades ending the

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5 Ibid., p. 482.

6 Ludwig Lewisohn, Expressionism in America (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1932), pp. 279-80. The revolt, Lewisohn adds, "was to culminate many years later in the works of Edgar Lee Masters and Sherwood Anderson."

nineteenth century, "that period certainly saw the most exclusive and brazen bribery and graft that was ever perpetrated in the history of our nation, just as it erected many a monument to the atrocious artistic taste of our people."[7] While land speculation was being conducted on a gigantic scale, accompanied by stock manipulations of various shades of illegality, while votes of the public and of legislators were bought and sold with cynical indifference or apathy toward moral values involved, the American public was complacently reading such sentimental romances as E.P. Roe's Barriers Burned Away and He Fell in Love with his Wife. Ironically, these sugar coated tales of sentimental love invariably pointed up the moral of avoiding evil and doing good.

The decline of romanticism cannot be set or bounded by exact dates, but the beginning of the end may be noted with the rise in popularity of "local color" stories following the Civil War, and the culmination was reached with the closing of the frontier in the 1890s by the spanning of the continent by transcontinental railroads. The need for the rise of centers of industry brought on by mechanical progress had turned rural villages into factory towns and cities, and where this did not happen, villagers flocked to the expand-

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7 Blankenship, op. cit., p. 404.

ing cities to find work. Gone in the fast-rising Industrial Age were the frontiersman, the individual craftsman, and many of the independent farmers who could set their own hours and wages in a self-sufficient scheme of life. Mass hiring and firing of men--a condition trembling to the insensitive dictates of economic laws--mass buying of raw materials and selling of finished products, resulted in cheap standardization. With the conflict of ideas and the economic upheaval following the Civil War and the expansion to the West, came varied expressions in literature, which resolved into Realism, the "three most important stones" in the foundation of which were Western Humor, the Literature of the Folk, and the Vogue of Local Color.[8]

Realism has been defined by William Dean Howells, its chief spokesman, as "nothing more and nothing less than the truthful presentation of material."[9] Naturalism goes a step further. Once the material has been truthfully presented, the naturalist seeks to interpret it. This theory was originally developed by Emile Zola in two books of criticism, The Naturalistic Novelists and The Experimental Novel. In the latter he writes:

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8 Louis Mann, editor, The Rise of Realism (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1938), p. 9.

9 William Dean Howells, Criticism and Fiction, (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1891), p. 73.

> The idea of experiment carries with it the idea of modification. We start, indeed, from the true facts, which are our indestructible basis; but to show the mechanism of these facts it is necessary for us to produce and direct the phenomena; this is our share of invention, here is the genius in the book.[10]

In other words, Zola asserts that "we must modify nature, without departing from nature, when we employ the experimental method in our novels." Further, Zola declared that "the question of heredity has a great influence in the intellectual and passionate manifestations of man," and he attached "considerable importance" to the surroundings.[11]

Thus, four influences making for literary realism and the rise of naturalism may be summed up: The closing of a period of American history which began with the Civil War and which was climaxed with the closing of the frontier; the rise of industrialism; the influence of science, seen in the tendency to observe closely phenomena under the writer's view--a theory developed by Zola; and the influence of foreign writers, particularly Zola, but also Balzac, Flaubert, Hardy, Tolstoy, and Dostoevski.

The beginning of naturalism, as that of the other periods, likewise cannot be set with exact certainty, but

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10 Emile Zola, The Experimental Novel (New York: The Cassel Publishing Company, 1893), p. 11.

11 Ibid., p. 19.

surely in Stephen Crane's The Red Badge of Courage (1895) "American naturalism had its first triumph,"[12] a reception not granted many other naturalistic writers in the stormy infancy of this period. For example, Theodore Dreiser's Sister Carrie, written in 1900, because it upset the lingering traditions of the romantic novel by its inconclusive ending, its lack of "moral" judgment, caused so much controversy that the book was withdrawn and found only reluctant acceptance fifteen years later. In 1915 Edgar Lee Masters published Spoon River Anthology, a work which, in addition to its own intrinsic worth, was an inspiration to other writers. Naturalism, indeed, not only produced some notable writers, but also became the incentive for other literary movements as well.

> The sociological school was a direct development of naturalism, and the revival of romance in the late nineties was only a reaction to the same influence. The village controversy in our literature was precipitated by a naturalistic study of the small town in Spoon River Anthology and the new romance accepts the basic contention of naturalism as the excuse for its romantic treatment of life. These are important movements since 1890, and each one has a direct kinship with the naturalistic movement.[13]

Spoon River Anthology was followed in 1919 by Sherwood Anderson's Winesburg, Ohio, a work in prose similar in that

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12 Blankenship, op. cit., p. 524.

13 Ibid., p. 521.

it also stripped the shallow optimism and sentimentality from the prevalent and popular conception of the small town. But long cherished ideals are hardy and do not die without a struggle, and in the ensuing "Battle of the Village" the sentimental status quo was not without its vigorous defenders. Such writers as Booth Tarkington, William Allen White, and Zona Gale of the "Friendship Village" period viewed in synthesis the American town as one where folksy neighbors gossiped over the back yard fence, where life centered around the white-steepled church, the high school class play, the friendly quilting party, the corner drug store. "By some magical feat unsatisfied desire has been exorcised from the hearts of the people, and all live together, happy in the performance of the daily round of homely tasks."[14] Typical of the defenders of the village was Booth Tarkington, whose facile technique in creating characters could never get them beyond fiction and his invented plots. Truth in everyday life escaped this type of writer; his characters moved in a heightened, imaginary world of selected incidents. James Branch Cabell has written in Beyond Life a "very true and discriminating criticism" of Tarkington:

> The world to us is not very strikingly suggestive of a cosmic gumdrop variegated by oceans of molasses;

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14 Ibid., p. 651.

> We dispute if Omnipotence was ever, at any time, a confectioner's apprentice: and to us whatever workmen may have been employed in laying out that "noble and joyous city" appear undoubtedly to have gone on strike.[15]

The culmination of the "Battle of the Village" heralded the acceptance, reluctantly at first, of naturalism which, for the purpose of this thesis, may be defined briefly as "a literary method which uses the material ordinarily utilized by realism, the common and ordinary along with the more elevated, and at the same time attempts to appraise the value of this material in terms of a pessimistic philosophy."[16] Zola's scientific approach, mentioned previously in this introduction, will be developed later in brief form as it applies to Sherwood Anderson's writings; however, because the purpose of this thesis lies in another field, no serious attempt will be made to draw any conclusions regarding analysis and causation, nor to explore the ramifications of free will versus determinism, the importance of environment over heredity; nor the conflict of naturalism in America with Puritanism and the frontier spirit, both dominant elements of thought up to the beginning of the twentieth century. All of these are important in their own right, and

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15 Ibid., p. 653. The original source was unavailable.

16 Ibid., p. 611.

it is sufficient here to mention only that the change in public taste, conditioned for the past several decades, was precipitated by World War I, that the final result was a widening general acceptance of a more realistic and interpretive type of writing, and that the naturalists were quick to take advantage of the situation. Among this group the novelists entered the field to expose the sham, the pretentiousness, and the sterility of American thought and life; they exposed the hypocrisy and false puritannical standards of the towns and cities; they exposed the industrial system which had enthroned the business man as king and had made automatons of the workmen; they set man up in his new environment and explored the workings of his mind; they stripped prudishness and fear from the subject of sex. And not the least among these writers was Sherwood Anderson, typical of the group:

> Disallusioned individualists, with no faith in reformers or in any part of the bourgeois class in control of society, they offered no definite program of change, but found full relief in full and hearty protest.[17]

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17 John Herbert Nelson, Contemporary Trends (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1938), p. 10.

CHAPTER II

Sherwood Anderson's Search for Salvation

> Man cannot think clearly of self, cannot see himself except through others. The self you seek, the true self you want to face, to accept, perhaps to love, is hidden away.[1]

IN ALL OF HIS WORKS, Sherwood Anderson drew heavily upon experiences from his own life, admitting in his *Memoirs* that the impressions a writer gathers during the first twenty years of his life of people and events are bound to become source materials for him all of his life, because during those formative years the imagination is most alive.[2] Alfred Adler has noted that "the most important determinants of the structure of the soul life are generated in the earliest days of childhood."[3] In a study of the use of psychology and philosophy in Sherwood

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1 Sherwood Anderson, *Memoirs* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1942), p. 6.

2 *Ibid.*, p. 40. See also pp. 15,27-28,32-35 *passim*, 54, etc., as well as his other autobiographies.

3 Alfred Adler, *Understanding Human Nature* (New York: The Garden City Publishing Company, 1927), p. 5.

Anderson's life as reflected in characters in his novels, it would be well to investigate briefly the author's own background and his important formative years.

Sherwood Anderson was born in Camden, Ohio, in 1876, the son of an Italian-American mother and an improvident, easy-going Civil War veteran. He led a rootless life in one Midwestern village after another, attended high school until he was eighteen, working after school hours on neighboring farms, at county fairs with race horses, and for a while in a bicycle factory. Upon the outbreak of the Spanish-American war he enlisted in the army and spent an uneventful period in Cuba, returning to find that he was regarded as a hero. He enrolled at Wittenburg College and later drifted to Chicago, where, according to his own account in his Memoirs, he worked with half-hearted zeal in an advertising agency, devoting his major interest to writing. After his marriage he set up a paint factory in Elyria, Ohio, although writing continued to be his major interest, and in 1912 he walked out of his business and left his family. The next period of his life, the "Chicago period", came to an end about 1926, after he had joined a group of writers including Floyd Dell, Hamlin Garland, Margaret Fuller, Harriett Monroe and others. Behind him was the "Elyria Crisis", which W.A. Sutton has shown to be

in the nature of a nervous breakdown resulting in temporary amnesia;[4] behind him was the failure of three marriages. A happier marriage and the first commercial success of a novel marked a turning point for Anderson about 1925. He moved to New York to continue writing, later moving to a Virginia farm and the editorship of two weekly newspapers. Anderson died in 1941 while on a trip to South America. His Memoirs was published posthumously and he had left behind material for several new books.[5]

Sherwood Anderson's life is not only to be found in his autobiographies--he wrote no less than four!--it is also shown in almost everything he wrote. Few authors have revealed themselves so candidly and so completely as he did in A Story Teller's Story, Tar: A Midwest Childhood, his Note-

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4 W.A. Sutton, "Sherwood Anderson's Formative Years--1876-1913", unpublished doctoral dissertation, Ohio State University. Quoted from Robert F. Almy, "Sherwood Anderson--The Non-Conforming Realist," Saturday Review of Literature, XXVIII (January 6, 1945), p. 18.

5 Some of the biography above has been taken from Paul Rosenfeld's introduction to The Sherwood Anderson Reader (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1947). Mr. Rosenfeld's assertion that Anderson attended high school until he was eighteen, for instance, has been quoted in preference to other statements which claim that he had no formal schooling after he was fourteen.

book, or his Memoirs; and facts, ideas, experiences, impressions, and his philosophy of life which are expressed in them, are also to be found in all of his novels. In his Memoirs Anderson idealized for the most part his childhood life, as he did in A Story Teller's Story and more fully in Tar: A Midwest Childhood. Yet underlying such fond and often idyllic memories there can be glimpsed a thread of disappointment and bitterness, a resentment of poverty, of the fact that his father was an irresponsible, shiftless dreamer and that his mother died too young in life because of overwork. Anderson could write such blithe statements as

> Lucky to have been born an American in what may well turn out to be America's happiest period, to have been born poor and in a small town where community life was intimate and close, to have had work as a laborer both in factories and on farms, thus to have known whence came the food that nourished my body and what toil went into its production, to have had the mother and the invariably picturesque father I had; lucky in my brothers; on the whole in my loves of women, in having been born with a talent; lucky in all circumstances . . .[6]

On the other hand, he noted that even at an early age "we had begun asking ourselves the unanswerable question:"

> Why is it that one is born into life in a big house, with a carriage at the door, with no thought of where food comes from, with warm clothes to wear, all of life to be lived in luxury, while we others, outside in the cold, often

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6 Memoirs, pp. 3-4.

> in ragged clothes, like little animals compelled to hunt our food from day to day? Why is it? Why is it? Why does our mother have to wash the dirty clothes soiled by other people?[7]

The result, Anderson continued, was not envy of others, but a kind of shame that took the form of hatred toward his father, a hatred that was not dispelled for many years. Whatever may have been his later feelings toward his father, Sherwood Anderson's childhood life could not have been as happy, his father as "invariably picturesque", nor Anderson as "lucky in all circumstances" as he would like to have had his readers--or himself--believe. His first three novels, Windy McPherson's Son (1916), Marching Men (1917), and Poor White (1920), reflect the same pattern of insecurity in childhood, the same desire of a boy to escape the poverty and intellectual sterility of the small town which he hated. Especially in his first novel and somewhat in Poor White one can find disappointment in Anderson's young Sam McPherson or Hugh McVey toward their fathers, a disappointment which in the former novel turns into bitter hostility. Windy McPherson is an exact picture of Anderson's father as he described him in A Story Teller's Story and in Memoirs. "A boy wants something very special from his father", Anderson wrote in Memoirs; "I know that as a small boy I

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7 Ibid., p. 27.

wanted my father to be a certain thing he was not...a proud, silent, dignified father."[8] This incident, like Anderson's description of his own childhood insecurity and poverty when he was "half unaware of the terror of actual hunger and yet . . . vaguely conscious of [his] mother's fright and sadness . . ."[9] is a part of the childhood experiences Anderson gives to Windy McPherson's son.

Like many of the characters in his novels, Anderson, after a period of activity as a newsboy and jack-of-all trades in various Ohio towns, settled in Chicago about 1910, where he worked at jobs ranging from day laborer to advertising copy writer. In Chicago he started working on his short stories. It was a preoccupation that would not let him rest; he was in the grip of a compulsion that led him to set down words on clean blank sheets of paper. "The act did something for me," he noted in his Memoirs:

> I kept writing little tales of people. I put them through experiences I had myself been through and suddenly there came a new revelation. It was this--that it is only by thinking hard of others that you can attain self-knowledge.[10]

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8 Ibid., p. 45.

9 See Memoirs, p. 20. One can question here whether Anderson's graphic account of his childhood poverty is based entirely on fact, or whether in later years, carried away by the picture, he cast a spell of romanticism or even sentimentality over the incident.

10 Memoirs, p. 6.

Anderson, struggling to be "what nature never intended [him] to be--a man of business" sought refuge in writing. He wrote reams of material; the reams became bales, and the bales, he recollects, were piled in great boxes, often left some place, forgotten. It was a period of "eternal questioning of self", of efforts to lose himself in books, and as he became increasingly absorbed in his escape to writing, he began to withdraw more and more into his world of fiction, to lose himself in the writing of others.

> If I could not think clearly of what seemed to me the false position in life into which I had got I could take some imaginary figure, a tall man with red hair, let us say, and put him in the same position in life in which I found myself. It was not myself. It was another. The imaginary figure perhaps created in my fancy began a little to live. He had adventures. Life beat in upon him. He became more and more real to me and in his growing reality I more and more lost self.[11]

Although Anderson became happier, went less on sprees with other men, and became more absorbed in the life around him, it was all disastrous to his business and to his home life. His relations with his wife, after "a long silent struggle", ended in divorce; his office became to him more and more of a prison, and he was confined to it by the thought of his responsibilities to his employees and his associates. But it was a situation which had to come to a conclusion, and

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11 Ibid., p. 193.

Anderson resolved it theatrically in his own way:

> The thought occurred to me [he candidly stated in his Memoirs,] that if men thought me a little insane they would forgive me if I lit out, left the business in which they had invested their money on their hands. I did it one day--walked into my office and called to the stenographer--it was a bright warm day in summer. I closed the door in my office and spoke to her. A startled look came into her eyes. "My feet are cold and wet," I said. "I have been walking too long on the bed of a river." Saying these words I walked out of the door leaving her staring after me with frightened eyes. I walked eastward along a railroad track, toward the city of Cleveland. There were five or six dollars in my pocket.[12]

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What was the reason for Sherwood Anderson's sudden flight from a successful career as a paint manufacturer? Why did he leave his business, his wife and children to rush madly to a strange city to begin scribbling as if he were possessed? What compulsion led him into this field? Anderson's "search for salvation", according to Clifton Fadiman, started after he was forty, and at that age it was difficult for Anderson to plunge into a new type of work. Men after forty, said Fadiman, write because they

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12 Ibid., p. 194.

are upset about something.[13] What--granting this thesis--was Anderson upset about?

He was upset about the drabness of people's lives--in the cities; where they led monotonous existences at monotonous jobs and returned along monotonous streets to monotonous homes and wives. What was the meaning of life here? Was man the real machine, and the mechanisms in the factories his master? Was man born to punch holes in pieces of steel eight or ten hours a day or tend bobbins in a cotton mill only to spend the rest of his time in drinking, or with a wife whose drab outlook on life matched his own? Was there nothing to look forward to but the next day's routine of work, nothing to see on the horizon but the neighbor's wash on a courtyard line? Why was there no order or purpose in life? Why had man failed to live up to the challenge offered by the machine age to build a better life?

Sherwood Anderson was upset about the towns and villages in America. Was the factory system destroying their individualism? Were townspeople really the kindly, virtuous neighbors that books and magazines pictured, or behind this popular opinion was there, as there was in the

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13 Clifton Fadiman, "Sherwood Anderson: The Search for Salvation," The Nation, CXXXV (November 9, 1932), p. 454.

cities, the hopelessness of a drab and empty future--people un-intellectual, self-satisfied or indifferent to their own ignorance, blind to beauty, intolerant of virtues in others because, hobbled by restricted and warped morals, they made much of their weakness and vices? And what was vice? And who was to judge what it was and what it was not, in another?

Anderson was upset about many other problems: Was a man's success to be measured by the amount of money he made in a year? But wealthy people are not always the most successful in conducting their lives. Was the man most successful who had the largest farm and the most grain and the biggest herd of cattle? But sickness or fire or drought could snatch these treasures away. Of what value was great industrial power to a man when his conscience told him that his personal life was weak? On what resources, then, could he depend; what was it that he needed to complete his life--to make it full--to give it meaning? Was it happiness? What kind of happiness? Happiness in money is miserly; happiness in possessions is covetousness. Was it in the security of the love of wife and family and friends? But how was one to find this security, or to communicate one's thoughts and feelings and desires? Could one ever really break down the barrier that is raised between one's true

self and others, and forego travelling through life alone and misunderstood in one's motives and thoughts? For what is man striving? If he has no goal on which to set his sights he is little more than existing from day to day. But how is one to find that goal, or to recognize it?

One of the predominant themes in the writings of Sherwood Anderson is sex. Why was Anderson so preoccupied with the subject? Was it sex that a man needed to make his life complete? Anderson's first three marriages were failures. The women he picked up on the streets may have helped him release a physical tension within him, but for the moment only, and never did they ease the confusion and perplexities in his mind. Bodies, not minds, met--and Anderson, unsatisfied, remained a lonely man. "As the confusion of the seventeen-year-old was largely sexual, one expects the confusion of the forty-year-old to be sexual also," Fadiman noted, adding that the large part which sex played in Anderson's writings was not due to any personal obsession, but to the phenomenon of reemergent adolescence.[14]

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14 Ibid. Fadiman goes on to say that "This rediscovery [of love--narcissism] in middle age, expressed primarily in terms of sexual behavior, is the key to an understanding of Anderson, as it is the key to an understanding of the whole American experience he represents. It explains the peculiar nature of Anderson's 'confusion'. . . . It explains the qualities of Anderson's art and it explains, I believe, why that art has lost much of its appeal and has not developed quite as we all hoped it once would."

Much of Anderson's writings expressed a longing for escape,[15] and his best works may be his stories about his boyhood days. Here is the psychological fact of a man not satisfied with life, bewildered by its complexities, looking backward to his youth and boyhood with nostalgia. Unable to cope with the problems facing the adult, he submerged himself to lose his identity, reappearing as a boy, or reshaping his life into another channel by means of his characters. Many authors have written autobiographies; of the novels of others, the first often contains much autobiographical material--the hero, for instance, is likely to contain many of the qualities of his creator, and the temptation to idealize these qualities is often carried out. Anderson went further; he was in every novel he wrote. In his earlier works his characters found that power and fame

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However, may not Fadiman's conclusion be regarded only as a partial answer? Anderson's preoccupation with sex may be in part due to "the phenomenon of reemergent adolescence", yet Anderson saw from an adult viewpoint that sex was a vital, urgent, and natural force that shaped people's lives, and one which had been barely mentioned in American writing before his time. His un-adolescent purpose in writing was to bring sex back to what seemed to him its normal place in the picture of life. (See Memoirs, p. 294.)

15 For instance, in Memoirs, he wrote: "I escaped out of myself" (p. 159). See also pp. 160, 193, 222, etc. He noted (pp. 184-85) that the critics characterized all of his tales as being of one sort--escape. Anderson's reply was that ". . . it must have seemed to me then, as for that matter it does yet, that the real tale of American lives is as yet just that."

were illusions and transitory. In later novels Anderson used his characters in attempts to solve his own personal problems. But a creation can be no wiser and no stronger than its creator, and as a result, after facing Anderson's problems in a fictional world, the characters cannot resolve them satisfactorily.

Not only in his autobiographies, but in his novels as well, Anderson must intrude to bare his thoughts to the reader, inviting him to share in confidences, to look into the author's secrets, to see his weaknesses and failings. Although the reader soon becomes wary of believing literally all that Anderson has spread out for him,[16] throughout his writings one senses that Anderson was searching his soul, that he was compelled to set his every act and thought on paper, with the result that in his attempt to explore the lives of his characters he revealed himself. He groped, he became inarticulate, he got tangled up in his half-formed, half-sensed impressions. He was blunt. He was sentimental and garrulous. He was ungrammatical and crude and a blunderer, but he was a poet. He was a self-admiring fraud,

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16 "What care I for the person's age, the color of his hair, the length of his legs?" Anderson wrote in Memoirs. "When writing of another being, I have always found it best to do so in accordance with my feeling. Besides, men do not exist in facts. They exist in dreams. My readers, therefore, those who go along with me, will have to be patient. I am an imaginative man." (p. 9.)

yet he was authentic.

As he once yearned for the mechanic to leave his machine so that he could find satisfaction in work turned out by his own hands, so Anderson resisted the temptation to become a commercial writer, to learn the so-called "tricks of the trade", to work up hackneyed and purely fictitious plots for popular consumption. He was widely read in the classics, but he was Anderson in his own writings.

Perhaps this may explain his compulsion to write, to seek salvation: He knew that to become a craftsman who created his own products honestly and with dignity gave a man satisfaction and a purpose in life.

The background of the literary age and the purpose of Sherwood Anderson in writing have been briefly treated up to this point. With the several incidents given in this chapter of the inter-relation of the life or the ideas of the author to the actions of characters in his novels serving as typical examples, an examination may now be made of the three major problems of life with which Anderson was most vitally concerned: The problems of profession and occupation, of man's social responsibilities, and of love and marriage. The next three chapters, forming the body of this thesis, will attempt to show how Sherwood Anderson

sought solutions for these problems by transferring them to the characters in his seven novels, and how the actions of these characters failed to provide him with satisfactory conclusions.

CHAPTER III

The Problem of Profession and Occupation

> Something is wrong with modern American life and we Americans do not want to look at it. We much prefer to call ourselves a great people and let it go at that.[1]

ONE OF THE FEATURES of the fast rise of the industrial age in America was the dualism between materialism and spiritualism; the acceptance of efficient--and therefore cheaper--methods of production resulted in standardization, and a by-product of the age was standardization in thinking. To the discerning, it could mean only a battle for quality against quantity and, as Regis Michaud has pointed out,

> . . .the fight in America today is, at the bottom, that of the elite against the masses. . . . This problem lies far beyond the power of statistics. It cannot be coped with by economists or sociologists. It falls within the pale of the moralist, the mystic and the philosopher.[2]

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1 Sherwood Anderson, Marching Men (New York: John Lane Company, 1917), p. 100.

2 The American Novel Today: A Sociological and Psychological Study (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1928), p. 9.

Sherwood Anderson saw clearly this dualism between materialism and spiritualism--quantity versus quality: the difference, for instance, between the brotherhood of Christianity toward which most Americans pay lip service on Sundays and the intense competition and unprincipled rivalry between men in business the other six days of the week. He recognized the growing tendency of men to place the most value on accumulated riches; he saw that

> with us the levels of aspiration concern chiefly the high prestige which comes with the accumulation of evidences of material wealth. Failure to achieve such culturally fixed goals lowers the anticipated status.[3]

Anderson recognized too that emotional strains may be set up by the divergence between profession and practice, where the true moral code, as revealed in the tolerance shown for the men who gain wealth by graft or dishonest stock manipulations, gambling, bootlegging, is far different from the theoretical moral code taught by church and school, or from that found embodied in the law. The differentiation has given rise to rationalization, for "when our action does not fit the profession, we consciously and unconsciously find excuses for the divergence."[4]

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3 Percival M. Symonds, The Dynamics of Human Adjustment (New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, 1946), p. 182.

4 Kimball Young, Personality and Problems of Adjustment (New York: F.S. Crofts and Company, 1940), p. 227.

In his earlier novels Anderson was a "sentimental rebel against industrialism."[5] His concern seemed in a large part esthetic: He deplored the loss of beauty and orderliness in the new age. The physical ugliness of the coal mining towns, of grimy Chicago streets, was one side of the picture; the other was the sentimental thought of workers straggling through factory gates, "with never an epigram on their lips."[6] Anderson became the champion of a fast-disappearing class, the defender of the individual craftsman whose stability in life came from the satisfaction of creating his material with his own hands, and a prophet who called for a return to pre-industrial days. He wrote of the craftsman as the salt of the earth, the upholder of democracy, and the stuff upon which a great America was founded. In his later works, however, he was to forego his yearning for the past, so that in his last two novels can be found recognition of new phenomena of American life: the adaptability of the American to the machine age, and the love of a worker for his machine. Here too may be found the fulfilment of a prophecy made sixteen years earlier in his third novel, that class distinction--a result of war

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5 Clifton Fadiman, "Sherwood Anderson: The Search for Salvation," The Nation, CXXXV (November 9, 1932), p. 455.

6 Anderson, Marching Men, p. 11.

between those who have and those who have not--would accompany the rise of industrialism.

The foregoing four points: The dualism of materialism and spiritualism; Anderson's rebellion against industrialism; the maladjustment of life in the industrial age, a problem which includes the rise of economic class distinction and its effect on individuals; and Anderson's change in attitude toward the factories, will form the body of this chapter, which deals with the search for a solution to man's problem of profession and occupation.

1.

Anderson attacked the problem of materialism versus spiritualism[7] most vigorously in his first three novels; this section will trace this subject in these books in their order of publication.

In Windy McPherson's Son (1916), Sam McPherson "represents the two states of the American conscience, the

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7 Materialism may be thought of for the purpose of this thesis as "the ethical doctrine that consideration of material well-being, especially of the individual himself, should rule in the determining of conduct," or "The tendency to give undue importance to material interests." Spiritualism is the opposite of this; it is "The practice of forming ideals," or "The tendency to idealize."

Christian and the primitive,"[8] and the concept of rationalization plays its part. McPherson's dual nature: the "shrewd, bold, heedless one" and "the shy, sensitive one."[9] struggled within him, the former fed by John Telfer when Sam was a boy and nourished later by his hard-fisted business associates in Chicago, and the latter nurtured by Mary Underwood and Janet Eberly, who opposed his childhood love of money and desire for power (which was compensation for the humiliation his father had caused him) by leading him to an understanding of great books and another way of life. Young Sam McPherson's resentment of poverty, the fear caused by want, the hardship of toil which caused his mother to die an early death, his shame of his improvident father, "a confirmed liar and braggart," caused the lad to believe "that the logical answer to the situation was money in the bank and with all the ardour of his boy's heart he strove to realize that answer."[10] Sam McPherson set out to be a money-maker. Anderson noted that compensation played a major part: further, the youth rationalized his situation and found divergence in his attempt to find security in material things:

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8 Michaud, op. cit., p. 171.

9 Page 349.

10 Sherwood Anderson, Windy McPherson's Son (New York: B.W. Heubsch, Incorporated, 1922, rev. ed.), p. 22.

> Fed by Banker Walker, the silent mother, and in some subtle way by the very air he breathed, the belief within him that to make money would in some way make up for the old half-forgotten humiliation in the life of the McPherson family and would set it on a more secure foundation than the wobbly Windy had provided, grew and influenced his thoughts and acts. In his bed at night he dreamed of dollars.[11]

The story of young Sam McPherson is paralleled by Anderson's own life which he had set down in his autobiographies: his poverty-stricken youth, his overworked mother and shiftless, garrulous father; young "Jobby" Anderson, the "boy eternally seeking jobs,"[12] who, as a friend told him later, "used to go about . . . declaring [his] determination to be a rich man, the most powerful in the state . . ."[13] Anderson fulfilled his own boyhood dreams in the main characters in his first three novels; all rose from poverty and obscurity in small Midwestern towns to fame and fortune. In the author's first novel, young Sam McPherson, with his head full of the idea of making more money, went to Chicago to make his business start, missing the significance and romance of it, "getting his sense of the bigness of it in dollars

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11 Ibid., p. 74.

12 Sherwood Anderson, Memoirs (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1942), p. 55.

13 Ibid., p. 150.

and cents,"[14] and joining the camp of the materialists.[15] A turning point in his life came when he was made buyer of all the materials used in the factories of the great Rainey Arms Company, and from the first day, when he "began to forge ahead in the Rainey Company," the novel takes on a typical romantic story-book pattern of a young man's meteoric rise to success. Barely turned twenty, he became treasurer; he married his employer's daughter, became an employee-member of the board, then Rainey's right hand man and virtual manager of the entire company. In an amalgamation deal with a rival company, by bribery and vote manipulation and a broken promise to his wife, he merged the two companies under the rival's name, justifying his action that to do otherwise would be false to his own principles. But Anderson has shown here that his principles were like those of the

> brute trader, blindly intent upon gain; much of the quality that has given America so many of its so-called great men. It was the quality . . . that had made him say . . . "I will do what I

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14 Windy McPherson's Son, p. 133.

15 Anderson significantly brought this out in the youth's first job, where the boy shows preference for the elder of two partners of his firm, a hard-fisted, calculating business man, in contrast to the younger partner, college-bred and interested in furthering the education of youth. Each day, Anderson wrote (p. 136), McPherson "saw more clearly the power of cash."

> can," when in truth he meant, "I will get what I can."

Further, Anderson caused McPherson again to rationalize his action:

> Instead of another Windy McPherson failing to blow his bugle before the waiting crowd, he was still the man who made good, the man who achieved, the kind of man of whom America boasts before the world.[16]

Sam McPherson had reached the top of his materialistic career: His position, his wife, his country, his end in life was, he thought, "the very apex of life on the earth, and to him in his pride it seemed that he was in some way the maker of it all."[17]

Integrated with the story of Sam McPherson's rise to power is the story of a type, a crowd, a gang--the product of the new industrial age--of men who "went mad of money making, [who] played with great industrial institutions and railroad systems like excited children. . . ."[18] Anderson revealed also how some of the participants, "captains of industry turned penmen, caesars become ink slingers" had boasted of their exploits to a public which admired them for getting away with it.

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16 Windy McPherson's Son, p. 246.

17 Ibid., p. 203.

18 Ibid., p. 248.

Although Sam McPherson was a foremost member of the business and industrial tycoons of his day, pride in his accomplishments could not sustain him on the top level. His dreams of "noble parenthood" thwarted by the inability of his wife to bear children, Sam and his wife drew apart and he plunged more deeply into his work. He controlled the press, congressmen, legislators, and went after oil, railroads, mining, timber; but he drank steadily, played poker for big stakes, and steadily degenerated. And for all his wealth and power, Sam found that

> the great forward movement in modern industry of which he had dreamed of being a part had for him turned out to be a huge meaningless gamble with loaded dice against a credulous public.[19]

Becoming dissatisfied, disillusioned, Sam in later years saw that the financiers, for the most part, "were but shrewd greedy vultures feeding upon the public or upon each other."[20] He recalled a sentence he had subconsciously written while voting to change the name of his company--a symbol of the latent spiritual nature of the man is shown by the action--"The best men spend their lives seeking Truth." He threw stock on the market and packed his bags. "He would try to spend his life seeking Truth."[21] The material life had

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19 Ibid., p. 250.

20 Ibid., p. 252.

21 Ibid., p. 255.

failed him.

The theme of materialism versus spiritualism is a dominant element of Anderson's second novel, Marching Men (1917). The dual nature of his central character, Norman (Beaut) McGregor, is one of brains versus brawn, of a youth who, much like his predecessor, Sam McPherson, grew up in a squalid mining town. Opposing forces of love and hate are brought out early in the novel. When he found a young neighbor reading the Bible and listened to him say that he would go among men like Christ if he had the power to do what he wanted to Coal Creek, Beaut mocked him and the statement of preaching the gospel of love:

> "Men of Coal Creek," he shouted, mimicking Mike, "I hate you. . . . I hate you because you are weak and disorganized like cattle. I would like to come among you teaching the power of force . . . I would like to slay you one by one, not with weapons but with my naked fists."[22]

Young Beaut McGregor's gospel of hate is underscored again and again throughout the earlier part of the novel;[23]

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22 Marching Men, pp. 52-53.

23 For example: "It seemed to him right and natural that he should hate men" (p. 12); the words of a drunken oculist that he was like Napoleon in that he had utter contempt for men "seemed to give point to [Beaut's] hatred of the disorganized ineffectiveness of the life about him" (p. 44); he goes to Chicago to find work, "huge, graceless of body, indolent of mind, untrained, uneducated, hating the world. . ." (p. 63).

Anderson's apology for hatred is an indictment of the modern industrial practice of ruthless competition, for the reader is told that McGregor's equipment to meet the competition of Chicago was better than he knew:

> In a disorderly haphazard world hatred is as effective an impulse to drive men forward to success as love and high hope. It is a world-old impulse sleeping in the heart of man since the day of Cain. In a way it rings true and strong above the hideous jangle of modern life. Inspiring fear it usurps power.[24]

In disorderly and haphazard Chicago, Beaut relied on hate to find work,[25] but at last he came to the realization that brute strength was not enough; a transition is seen in his words to his superintendent: "Brains are intended to help fists. . .I've got both."[26] He felt that he had won two battles at that moment: the first with his fists when he was the victor in a direct and brutal attack on his foreman, and the second with his brain when he forestalled patronage of his superintendent by quickly paying for drinks in a saloon. He began to rely on his brain and

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24 Marching Men, p. 64.

25 For example: "When some pert young man tried to stop him he did not say words but drew back his fist threateningly and, glowering, walked in" (p. 67). He finds a job in an apple warehouse "through an exhibition of strength" (p. 68); he chokes the foreman into submission and takes his job away from him (pp. 70-71).

26 Marching Men, p. 73.

studied for the law. In a sensational murder trial he cleared an innocent man and gained a city-wide reputation. Then as leader of a labor group that spreads in size and power, he commanded attention throughout the nation.

Up to this point MacGregor is like Sam MacPherson: powerful, purposeful, a force to be reckoned with, using brute force whenever necessary, seeking material gain. "Why has thought never succeeded in replacing action?" he asked himself,[27] and again, at his mother's funeral, he roared at a travelling socialist orator: "You will have to do more than think . . . Mankind should be like a great fist ready to smash and strike. It should be ready to knock down what stands in its way."[28] The transition from action to thought was completed and the change in his character effected when he saw miners at his mother's funeral march up a hill, when the line of silent figures marching was etched like a picture on his mind, so that he became conscious of a strange power and beauty in the rhythm of their march and began to feel a sense of orderliness and unity there. His hatred toward men of his home town faded and the idea of Marching Men began to grow in his mind, a vague thought that solidarity and unity of purpose among all

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27 Ibid., p. 129.

28 Ibid., p. 143.

workers could be achieved by marching--of men shoulder to shoulder achieving in mass orderliness a singleness of purpose. McGregor gave up a career as a successful criminal lawyer to devote his life to the ideal that had been first implanted in hatred in his mind by a drunken wandering oculist. The material life had failed also Beaut McGregor.

There are many stories in Anderson's third novel, Poor White (1920); what saves the book from becoming a collection of unconnected short stories is the relationship of the main characters to the minor personages who appear in brief incidents, much as George Willard is the thread upon which are strung the various stories in Winesburg, Ohio. Hugh McVey's attempt to overcome the barrier that separated him from normal relationship with others, and Clara Butterworth's search for happiness are united in the closing pages of Poor White after McVey found for himself the solution to the problem of occupation. When Steve Hunter, one of Anderson's symbols of a product of the industrial era--"a solid business man, a mentor of the new age"--wanted Hugh to re-make a labor-saving device to circumvent the patent of an Iowa man in order to freeze him out in an unscrupulous business deal, Hugh began to wrestle with his conscience, and the problem of material-

ism versus spiritualism, once "Hugh began to think," demanded an answer. "There was an unconscious defiance of a whole civilization," Anderson wrote, in Hugh's attitude toward any part of the plan.[29]

As Sam McPherson and Beaut McGregor had rationalized their actions and had deliberately sought over-compensation in the fiercely competetive field of the material world of big business, so Hugh McVey covered up his unsuccessful attempts to establish social communication with his fellow beings by devoting his life to the study and invention of labor-saving machinery, trying "to adjust his mind to the realization of the fact that he was not to be accepted as a fellow by the citizens of the new place to which he had come."[30] Although he had been the primary force, through his inventions, in the transformation of the farming town of Bidwell into a growing factory center, Anderson has shown that Hugh had not accepted the responsibility of his actions. Hugh had not seen that control of his inventions had passed into the hands of a few business men who were exploiting him and the townspeople for their own gain. Hugh's brain had been entirely turned

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29 Sherwood Anderson, Poor White (New York: B.W. Heubsch, Incorporated, 1920), p. 365.

30 Ibid., p. 64.

toward the making of new machinery without foreseeing the consequences of his work, (there is a strong reminder here of Beaut McGregor's cry of "Why has thought never succeeded in replacing action?"); and the saving of Hugh McVey came at the moment he did start to think, when he found that the materialistic life had failed him.

In each of the foregoing novels of Anderson, a climax was reached when Sam McPherson, Beaut McGregor, or Hugh McVey shouldered and fought their way to the top of the world, surveyed the materialistic scene below, and found it wanting. Up to this point Anderson had been leading up to valid human problems, but once "having uncovered the truth, he lacked the courage to face it."[31] In none of these first three novels, once the problem has been exposed, has Anderson carried it through to a satisfactory conclusion, so that while he successfully and often with great insight could write of the tragedy and the unfulfilled opportunities awaiting man who has chosen to follow a materialistic goal, his interpretation of the values of the spiritual life leaves his readers more often than not with the feeling that Anderson was confused, and that in his confusion he sought

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31 Cleveland B. Chase, Sherwood Anderson (New York: McBride and Company, 1927), p. 6.

refuge in sentimentalism and wishful thinking, or retreat.[32]

2.

Anderson's exposé of materialism and the dual nature of his central characters form a major theme of his first three novels; in all of his works, however, it is easy to trace his sentimental rebellion against the forces of industrialism. The drab and often alarming picture of a disorganized America horrified him; he saw the industrial age turning men into a vast, undisciplined army, "going in route-step along the road to they know not what end."[33] His first novel set the tone for what he was to repeat in anxious digressions of various degrees of emphasis in all his works:

> I have said that the sense of equity in Sam fought an unequal battle. He was in business, and young in business, in a day when all Amer-

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32 Chase has succinctly stated Anderson's weakness: "He has the comparatively rare gift of stating human problems validly; but once having stated them, he runs off, hysterically frightened at what he has done. He has sufficient insight into people, events and emotions to broach a number of pertinent subjects, but not once, even in Winesburg, has he carried his investigations to the end without flinching." (p. 80) For a more detailed analysis of these statements, see pp 84ff of this thesis.

33 Marching Men, p. 11.

> ica was seized with a blind grappling for gain. The nation was drunk with it, trusts were being formed, mines opened; from the ground spurted oil and gas; railroads creeping westward opened yearly vast empires of new land. To be poor was to be a fool; thought waited, art waited; and men at their firesides gathered their children around them and talked glowingly of men of dollars, holding them up as prophets fit to lead the youth of the young nation.[34]

Again and again in Marching Men Anderson presented the picture of a country which has missed the opportunity to utilize its newly-discovered resources for the benefit of its people: ". . .men, coming out of Europe and given millions of square miles of black fertile land, mines and forests, have failed in the challenge given them by fate and have produced out of the stately order of nature only the sordid disorder of man."[35] Not only has man produced disorder in his surroundings, but also--and this was even more oppressive to Anderson--man's thoughts have turned toward mechanical progress: "A sense of quiet growth awoke in sleeping minds. It was the time for art and beauty to awake in the land . . . instead, the giant, Industry, awoke." It was indeed an oppressive thought to Anderson. As the materialistic age advanced, he yearned for the past

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34 Windy McPherson's Son, pp. 139-40.

35 Marching Men, pp. 63-64. For other examples of the "sordid disorder" of man, of the "mis-fire quality" of American life, see pp. 11-12, 38, 61-63, 66-67, 75-77, 79, 100-101, 149, 150-60 passim, 173, 188, 291, etc.

with a nostalgic tenderness, bringing up visions of "a quaint and interesting civilization" that was being developed even in the smallest of the rural villages; of men who worked hard but who had time to think and to reach out toward the solution of the mystery of existence, of "a feeling, ill expressed, that America had something real and spiritual to offer to the rest of the world."[36] People were neighbors who took time to know each other, he wrote, "and there was no constant and confusing roar of machinery and of new projects afoot. For the moment mankind seemed about to take time to try to understand itself."[37] Anderson had a sentimental word even for drunken reprobates:

> Some touch of nature, a sweet undercurrent of life, stays alive in them and is handed down to those who write of them, and the most worthless man that walks the streets of an Ohio or Iowa town may be the father of an epigram that colours all the life of the men about him.

His reminiscences that "in the prairie towns of the South from which have come so many of our writing men, the citizens swagger through life" was an attempt to shut out the ugliness of the present:

> In a mining town or deep in the entrails of one of our cities life is different. There the disorder and aimlessness of our American lives be-

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36 Poor White, p. 36.

37 Ibid., p. 47.

> come a crime for which men pay heavily. Losing step with one another, men lose also a sense of their own individuality so that a thousand of them may be driven in a disorderly mass in at the door of a Chicago factory morning after morning and year after year with never an epigram from the lips of any one of them.[38]

In each of his novels such examples of the results of a great power misdirected are to be found.[39] Anderson was at his best in these scenes; in his comparison of the virtues of the post-civil war days to the modern age he often became vaguely sentimental. What saved him from soft sentimentalism was that in spite of such idealistic reminiscences of by-gone days, he had the insight to look into the lives of the villagers, who were not always as kindly and as virtuous as he had wished them to be. This was shown in his earlier novels by the relation of the major characters to the townspeople.

Sam, Beaut, and Hugh, in Anderson's first three novels, respectively, grew up to hate their home towns. In Windy McPherson's Son this is expressed fully, yet a boy cannot grow up in a town without feeling some sort of affection for it; thus Sam felt "that in a way he was a child of Caxton;" he remembered the encouragement and words of advice, the praise for his money-making ability,

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38 Marching Men, p. 11.

39 See Appendix C

kindnesses given because of his toiling mother, but in spite of these recollections, he did not want to stay. Rather, upon leaving town,

> Like the Roman Emperor he wished that all the world had but one head that he might cut it off with a slash. The town that had seemed so paternal, so cheery, so intent on wishing him well, now seemed horrible.[40]

As a youth, Sam had been startled by coarseness of speech and revelations of ugly brutality even in well-meaning and kindly men; when he was mature he decided that "it is a quality in our lives . . . American men and women have not learned to be clean and noble and natural, like their forests and their wide, clean plains . . ."

> Will mankind always go on with that old aching, queerly expressed hunger in its blood, and with that look in its eyes? Will it never shrive itself and understand itself, and turn fiercely and energetically toward the building of a bigger and cleaner race of men?[41]

The pattern is repeated in Anderson's second and third novels. "The town of Coal Creek was hideous," he wrote in Marching Men; in Poor White, Hugh McVey was born "in a little hole of a town stuck on the mud bank on the western shore of the Mississippi River in the State of Missouri. It was a miserable place in which to be

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40 P. 110. Sam had become disillusioned because of vicious gossip concerning his friend Mary Underwood, the school teacher.

41 Ibid., pp. 311-12.

born."[42] And like Sam McPherson and Beaut McGregor, Hugh McVey "began to hate his own father and his own people."[43] In these novels Anderson painted sordid pictures of men in these small towns living like brutes: "In Coal Creek when men got drunk they staggered in silence through the streets;"[44] they drank greedily in saloons and went home to beat their wives; the miners, feeling the injustice of their lot, found no way to express themselves.[45]

Again in Marching Men is to be seen the picture of a boy leaving his home town full of hatred for its people; Beaut's thoughts as his train leaves Coal Creek were a virtual echo of Sam McGregor's:

> He looked back at Coal Creek, full of hate. Like Nero he might have wished that all of the people of the town had but one head so that he might have cut it off with a sweep of a sword or knocked it into the gutter with one swinging blow.[46]

Examples of Anderson's rebellion against the forces of industrialism in his first three novels often contrasted existence in a dirty, noisy city with the romantic ideal of a sweeter and more gentle life in a rural community; in

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42 Poor White, p. 3.

43 Ibid., p. 14.

44 Marching Men, p. 12.

45 Ibid., p. 39.

46 Ibid., p. 59.

his last four novels he had accepted the situation of modern times so that his writing does not reflect wishful thinking of escape so much as it does a concern which he expressed through his characters. Typical of this is John Webster's thought in Many Marriages:

> Why is it that so many houses along the street were ugly? Were people unaware? Could any one be quite completely unaware? Could one wear ugly commonplace clothes, live always in an ugly or a commonplace street of a commonplace town and remain always unaware?[47]

3.

Sherwood Anderson was not only a sentimental rebel against industrialism, casting nostalgic glances over his shoulder at an earlier, predominantly rural America, wistfully idealizing each town as having a character of its own, and the people who lived in these towns as being to each other like members of a great family,[48] he also took the problems of the industrial age, using them as a major thesis in most of his novels, and exposed the results to sharp criticism. An analysis of Anderson's attack falls in three major divisions: The effects of in-

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47 Page 38.

48 Poor White, p. 46.

dustrialism on the towns of the Midwest and the South; the rise of an economic class distinction; and its effect on individuals.

Concerning the first division, Anderson in his earlier novels fired his biggest guns at Chicago, whose leading citizens "had clamoured for the exposition [of 1893] and had loudly talked of the great growth that was to come [but who] did not know what to do with the growth now that it had come."[49] Long, digressive paragraphs may be found in Marching Men and, to a lesser extent, in Dark Laughter concerning Anderson's indignation over the grimy sordidness of the city, where, "given a free hand, an undiscriminate lot of badly trained carpenters and bricklayers had builded houses beside the cobblestone road that touched the fantastic in their unsightliness and inconvenience."[50] In Poor White he portrayed a rapid, unplanned metamorphosis of a town from an agricultural village into an ugly factory center. In Beyond Desire and Kit Brandon, Anderson's attention shifted to the South as he pictured the rise of the mill villages and the encroachment of the industrial age from the North and Midwest.

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49 Marching Men, p. 61.

50 Marching Men, p. 76. See also pp. 61-62, 75-76, 78, 100-101, etc., and pp. 18 and 41 in Dark Laughter.

There is much in his first two novels that may be classified as "sociological"--Anderson reported the grim desperation of people caught in an economic depression, for instance, in Chicago--but in Poor White, his third novel, he went beneath the surface of objective reporting to record the beginning of a class struggle: the rise of an economic class distinction, a phenomenon of the industrial age whose prophet for much of the action in later novels was Judge Hanby who, in Poor White, sounded persistent and ominous warnings as "a sort of John the Baptist crying out of the coming of the new day:"

> "Well, there's going to be a new war here," he said. "It won't be like the Civil War, just shooting off guns and killing people's bodies. At first it's going to be a war between individuals to see to what class a man must belong; then it is going to be a long, silent war between classes, between those who have and those who can't get it. It'll be the worst war of all."[51]

The preliminary skirmishes of the class war predicted by Judge Hanby, already beginning to take shape in the earlier part of Poor White, received impetus when, after the workers in the new factory were incited by paid organizers to strike, Tom Butterworth, onetime gentleman farmer and lover of fast horses and now a budding industrialist, railed against them in a flush of arrogant pride:

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51 Poor White, p. 51.

> They better look out. . . . We're inventing new machines pretty fast now-adays . . . Pretty soon we'll do all the work by machines. Then what'll we do? We'll kick all the workers out and let them strike till they're sick, that's what we'll do.[52]

Judge Hanby's "new war" was, in Poor White, still in the stage of a struggle between individuals to see to what class a man must belong, but Anderson already had placed Tom Butterworth and his partner Steve Hunter among "those who have":

> They were solid business men, mentors of the new age, the kind of men who, in the future of America and perhaps of the whole world, were to be the makers of government, the molders of public opinion, the owners of the press, the publishers of books, buyers of pictures, and in the goodness of their hearts, the feeders of an occasional starving and improvident poet, lost on other roads.[53]

In Beyond Desire and Kit Brandon Anderson transferred his locale to the Upper South and wrote of "the coming of the machine, science, mechanical progress, the over-balance,"[54] an incident of which is revealed in a girl factory worker's argument that in the modern industrial world "a man or woman got too much lost, was made to feel too small," and Anderson grimly added that whereas great care was taken to

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52 Ibid., pp. 351-52.

53 Ibid., pp. 180-81.

54 Kit Brandon, p. 216.

keep dust from accumulating on machines by means of hoods, the workers were left to breathe it into their lungs.[55] One of the basic needs, Anderson was saying throughout these last two novels, is that a worker must be given back his dignity and sense of importance, values which were lost with the dying out of the craftsman and his trade. There is little pride of accomplishment for a factory worker, and Anderson tried anxiously and earnestly to point both the worker and the industrialist to the example of the farmer:

> See the farmer, even on poor land, who has raised a small patch of good corn. He can walk a little more proudly. Something grows in a man through work. It can be killed when his work is degraded.[56]

It's not too late to change, Anderson seemed further to plead, pointing out the fact that the factory workers were not yet too far removed from their fathers and grandfathers, that "they were not too far away from something else, something once very much alive... individuality... the day of America's greater richness . . . Day of the craftsman too..."[57] Anderson in Kit Brandon wrote of the sons and daughters, as it were, of his characters in

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55 Ibid., p. 82.

56 Ibid., p. 83.

57 Ibid., p. 84.

Poor White, and showed that even one generation later the war between individuals had swung over into the war between classes. In Poor White neighbors competed as factory worker and foreman; in Kit Brandon the gulf had become almost impassible and the lines had been set between classes. The feeling was expressed by one of the mill girls, bitterly denouncing the "continual strutting of those up above":

> We come out of the factory after one of the long days or a longer night. Do they think we are blind? Can't we see? We see so much blossoming in America, fine roads being built, the automobiles, always getting faster, more beautiful. We see rich women, richly gowned. We see beautiful houses built for those who never made anything with their hands.[58]

Kit Brandon herself felt that her life was bounded by barriers of class distinction. She did not like her job in the mill factory for "she thought the loss of the feeling of being a part of something big and significant came from a certain attitude toward workers by those up above. It came from society." It was an invisible force that permeated every section of the town when the workers trooped in on Saturday night, "contempt, held tight too, treasured by those not mill workers."[59] The complete swing from a

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58 Ibid., p. 85.

59 Ibid., pp. 62-3.

struggle between individuals to a war between classes is to be found summed up in two quotations from Anderson's last novels. In Beyond Desire the contempt of one class for another is succinctly expressed: "For the town team to have played the mill boys [in baseball] would have been almost like playing niggers. They wouldn't have said that, but they felt it."[60] In his last novel, Anderson observed that the thing basically wrong with material wealth is a feeling of superiority to others: "'These people I see shuffling through the streets. They are of an inferior stock.'" On this notion, he wrote, was the basis on which was built the idea of Southern aristocracy in America, "something to put against the fact of chattel slavery while it existed," which has carried over to be applied against the factory workers: "You go into a Southern city," he stated in Kit Brandon, "and see there, walking along, a very beautiful woman. You are with a Southerner. 'Look,' you cry, 'how beautiful she is.' 'What, a nigger beautiful?' Or...'Can there be such a thing as a beautiful factory girl?'"[61]

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60 Page 39.

61 Page 221.

Anderson not only has written a history of the war between classes, he also has noted its effect on individuals. The changes wrought by the industrial age are expressed in Poor White only incidentally in their physical sense;[62] he emphasized, rather, the effect on the lives of the people and the temper of the community. He showed the change in character of Tom Butterworth; he selected two townspeople in the persons of Ben Beeler, carpenter, and Ed Hall, carpenter's assistant, to illustrate the change in thought of the community and the beginning of the cleavage of the townspeople into two classes; and he personified the independent, proud age of the self-sufficient craftsman and the brash, young, callous industrial age in old Joe Wainsworth, master harness maker, and young Joe Gibson, his assistant.

A new prosperity brought on by the success of a factory had made a new man of Tom Butterworth: "Now he talked like a prince . . ."[63] His daughter, returning from

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62 For example: "Already the town had changed. Three new brick buildings were being erected on Main Street . . . Workmen employed in the building of the factory had come to town to live, and many new houses were being built. Everywhere things were astir." (pp. 125-6.)

63 Poor White, p. 196.

college, noticed for the first time how his person had changed.

> Like Steve Hunter he was beginning to grow fat. The lean hardness of his cheeks had gone, his jaws seemed heavier, even his hands had changed their color. He wore a diamond ring on his left hand . . .[64]

On their trip home from the station he would not let his horse walk, but kept cracking the whip over his back, declaring to his daughter, "I'm a different man than I was when you went away."[65] The change in his character was further underscored when he confessed that he had given up his longing to own and to drive fast racing horses. Anderson knew that there was no place for horses in the industrial world, and as Tom Butterworth, his spokesman for the new order, races the motor of his automobile, he is made to shout "Where would the damned race horses be now . . . trying to catch up with me in this car?"[66]

The separation of the employer from the employed is represented in Ed Hall who, becoming a foreman at the factory, got $25 a week, "more money than he had ever dreamed of earning in a week."[67] Just as the town banker's

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64 Loc. Cit.

65 Ibid., p. 197.

66 Ibid., p. 349.

67 Ibid., p. 214.

mind also "began to secrete the poison of the age,"[68] in three deft little sketches Anderson aptly showed the change which unaccustomed prosperity and authority had wrought in the former carpenter's assistant. In one incident he smugly hefted his wallet; he counted the money in it--twice. In a second scene he was at first upset and joked when he was addressed as "Mr. Hall" by an old tobacconist, the first time that he had ever been called by a title; later he "was sorry he had not accepted the title without protest." He grew to feel about the men under him a kind of superiority: "I can't be getting thick with them."[69] In a third instance he worked with his men to outdo them, so that they took up the challenge and worked faster, feeling still a man-to-man and a personal relationship with a neighbor and an equal. However, they learned later that a piece-work plan was to be put in effect and that their pay was to be based on the output of their two weeks of furious effort. The prophecy of Judge Hanby was beginning to reveal itself, the effect of which Anderson showed the roots in Poor White and the mature flowering in Beyond Desire and Kit Brandon.

Following the building of a factory in Bidwell and the influx of new labor, Ben Pealer, town carpenter, became

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68 Ibid., p. 125.

69 Ibid., p. 214.

a contractor. He no longer had time to go into the country on pleasant but relatively profitless barn-building jobs, with their attendant hours of gossip, coffee in the kitchen, and neighborly comradeship; he did not loaf in the drug store with companions at the end of the day. He acquired a lumber yard, worried about his property being lost through fire or theft, became irritable, lost sleep, dreamed one night of killing his brother, and the next morning decided to insure his property. Anderson's comment was as ironical as he could make it. "That settles it," Ben Pealer was made to say; "It's simple enough, you see. That settles everything."[70]

The unequal battle of an aged craftsman clinging to the proud traditions of the past against the rising tide of machines is reduced in scale to a struggle between old Joe Wainsworth, the harness maker, and young Jim Gibson, his assistant--and "the contest concerned the question of who was to run the shop."[71] Joe Wainsworth expressed the ideal of the craftsman's faith in his work and the rights it gave him: "I know my trade and do not have to bow down to any man . . . Learn your trade. Don't listen to talk . . . The man who knows his trade is a man. He can tell

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70 Ibid., pp. 204-207, passim.

71 Ibid., p. 207 ff.

every one to go to the devil."[72] In the mind of Tom Butterworth's daughter Clara "the harness maker had come to stand for all the men and women in the world who were in secret revolt against the absorption of the age in machines and the product of machines. He had stood as a protesting figure against what her father had become and what she thought her husband had become."[73] Joe Wainsworth, "who had been the first man in Bidwell to feel the touch of the heavy finger of industrialism,"[74] became a silent, disgruntled man when he was urged by Tom Butterworth to repair harness made by machines in a factory. Jim Gibson gradually dominated the older man and began to buy machine-made harness, to raise prices, to install more "efficient" methods, so that within a year the shop began to make money, but Joe could not understand why, although he had put nearly twice as much money in the bank during the two years his assistant had been with him as he had earned slowly after twenty years of work, the fact seemed so unimportant.[75] Tom Butterworth, of course, sided with Jim Gibson:

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72 Ibid., p. 55.

73 Ibid., pp. 354-55.

74 Ibid., p. 134.

75 Ibid., pp. 208-9.

> That's the kind of man to handle workers. Joe Wainsworth ain't got the character . . . The damn fools! . . . They think they can stop the machines. Let 'em try. They want to go on in their old hand-made way. Let 'em look out. Let 'em look out for such men as Jim Gibson and me.[76]

Anderson's observations, however, went deeper than mere reporting of feeling. While he unfolded the fulfillment of Judge Hanby's prophecy, showing the rise of class distinction and its effect on individuals, he indicted the worker for accepting a subservient role, for admiring the Steve Hunters and Tom Butterworths, for allowing them to become "the molders of public opinion"; and in an example, typical of many, Anderson stepped into a novel himself, to take the reader by the elbow and lead him aside for an earnest chat. "You see" (Anderson says to his reader), "this is what so many people are thinking; this is what Kit Brandon was thinking, although she couldn't put it into words. Let me explain it to you:"

> The thing Kit had often felt, never quite defined in her own mind, was defined often enough in things heard. . . . The rich, the ones up above them, mill owners, politicians, prominent men and women of all sorts in the mill towns were like the movie stars in Hollywood. "Their doing what they do is not like our doing it." The idea was in some indefinable way like that. "They must be smart. I'm not smart." There was a politician accused of stealing a million dollars from the state. He laughed. "Why you are mistaken. I didn't steal a million. I stole two million."

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76 Ibid., pp. 351-52.

> There were poor, often scrupulously honest, curiously religious, who gave him a kind of admiration. They went to the polls and voted for him. "After all, he's smart. He's a big man."
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> Or he got in trouble, denied his guilt, was tried, convicted and they were sorry for him.[77]

So concerned was Anderson with this theme that he digressed for a sizeable part of Kit Brandon to hammer the point home in the story of Alf Weathersmythe, his grandfather, and his father, who "was a small fat man and a constant hard drinker, although he did not drink in public . . . he was after all a Weathersmythe."[78]

In Windy McPherson's Son, Anderson described one of the results of the industrial age: "The type, the crowd, the gang" of industrialists who, with the apathy if not the approval or admiration of the public, seized power and control of American business; in Dark Laughter he portrayed the cynicism and looseness of morals in Paris following the first World War, when restraint was tossed aside, and in Kit Brandon Anderson surveyed the opening of the Prohibition era and in a bitter parody of big business in America exposed another type of gang from that in Windy McPherson's Son and Marching Men-- the bootlegger

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77 Kit Brandon, pp. 254-55.

78 Ibid., p. 297.

crowd, "a special race sprung up in the midst of society" --and he compared this type with the pioneers of America. Tom Halsey, a rum runner and a minor big shot, was "a pioneer of business, or industry,":

> He was like a man building a railroad across the continent in an earlier day . . . stealing land along the railroad as he went . . . corrupting legislatures of States as he went. He was like a fur trader, of an earlier day . . . breaking down the morals of Indians. He was an organizer in steel, in oil, he was a chief.[79]

He felt himself in the American business tradition: "He had thought about it, had his own pride. He felt that American business men, captains of industry, were really big men and that he was on the road to bigness."[80] And Anderson included in Kit Brandon the story of the money crop of the southern hills--moon liquor--as part of the history of the growth of other American big business firms: organized steel, the oil industry, tobacco, the woolen industry. Tom Halsey organized thousands of small scattered units under one head, and in applying modern business methods he "had but followed in the footsteps of others in a modern world."[81] As the stock swindles, land-grabbings, vote bribings of

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79 Ibid., p. 46.

80 Ibid., p. 116.

81 Loc. cit.

the industrialists met with the complacent approval and, as Anderson has shown, often with the admiration of the general public if the illegality were brazen enough, so Anderson showed in Kit Brandon how the illicit liquor racket became successful and a force in the business world because it had the tacit approval of the politicians and the support even of those who professed openly to oppose it. Kit Brandon, rum runners' accomplice, rationalized in typical fashion that the law enforcement officials were not too far removed from the law breakers, "And the people who buy the stuff, too. . . . If we're so bad what about the ones who pay for the stuff we run to them?"[82]

Tied in with the story of Kit Brandon and Red Oliver in Anderson's last two novels are the story of labor, of the rise of the cotton mill in the South and the mushroom growth of mill towns, and of a new type of man in the Upper South, of man corrupted by the advance of the machine age: the "Mill Daddy", who moved down in numbers from the hills to place their wives and all of their daughters to work in the mill. You still see such men in any mill town, Anderson related. "They are lost there. . . . They are lost souls, wandering aimlessly about, sitting like

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82 Ibid., p. 248.

Indians in the sun and perhaps gazing off, all day, toward the hills out of which they have come."[83]

In Anderson's indictment of the morals of the new age, the forces of materialism have been shown to be responsible, and in exposing the effects of the industrial age upon individuals, Anderson has noted that much of the fault lies with the people, who have placed the highest value on a moral code which is divergent from that taught by official religion and morals, or embodied in the law.

4.

In the progress of his novels from Windy McPherson's Son, Anderson has chronologically recorded the rise of the industrial towns of the Midwest and the South, the making of a new economic class distinction, and the effect of industrialism on individuals. While Anderson consistently protested the loss of dignity and self-respect of those who have become merely tenders of machines, while he recorded the rise to power of industrial gangs and business tycoons, abetted in the admiration and tacit approval even of those

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83 Ibid., p. 21.

who were unwittingly victimized, in Beyond Desire and Kit Brandon he remained no longer a sentimental rebel against industrialism. He recognized at last and was fascinated by the sleekness and stirring power of the modern machine;[84] he exclaimed with rapture on the change brought about by fast highways and the motor car,[85] he called for a poet to express the beauties of the mechanical wonders of the age. At the same time Anderson recognized that the new age had brought with it much that is ugly; what is significant is that Anderson no longer seemed to revolt against the industrial system, but rather he called for the workmen to "rise in nobility to the nobility of the machine."[86] In Marching Men he cried out for "order" and "purpose" to come into the American way of life; in his last two novels

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84 For instance in Perhaps Women, written in 1931, he declared "I am sick of my old self that protested against the machine. I am sick of that self in me . . . that would not live in my own age." In an article in The Nation (see bibliography) Clifton Fadiman characterized this statement as one of "childish ferocity" against the machine age. This thesis gives the opposite viewpoint. Further in the quotation, for instance, Anderson "sings of the glories of a ride in a machine." "If I had music in me," he continued, "I would orchestrate this." (p. 14). See page 455 of Fadiman's article and at least pages 14 and 15 of Perhaps Women.

85 ". . .oh, American workmen, American inventors, you have done something here, oh mechanical age, this is your finest accomplishment." (Kit Brandon, p. 170.)

86 Sherwood Anderson, Puzzled America (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1935), p.147.

he found it, and he reserved his highest praise for the mill: "In the mill there was always a sense of order, of things moving forward toward an orderly end . . ."[87] He repeated this phrase again and again in what amounted to almost lyrical outbursts, transferring with a great surge of feeling his own impressions of visits to the mills:

> Oh, the great light rooms, the singing machines, the shouting dancing machines! Look at them against the sky in cities! See the machines running in a thousand mills![88]

The big rooms were "clean and orderly," each thread from the spools was in its place, the machines knew what they had to do, and each machine "went singing and humming" to its task.[88] Red Oliver, Anderson's spokesman in Beyond Desire for the author's fascination for the precision of the machines, quite naturally felt "a kind of exaltation" in the rooms. "In the mill, as never before in his young life," Anderson wrote, "Red got a sense of the human mind doing something definite and in [of course!] an orderly way."[88] It was almost too much for Anderson to bear; he almost stuttered in his excitement; he repeated himself: "There was something exultant in Red, working in that place,"

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87 Sherwood Anderson, Beyond Desire (New York: Horace Liveright, Incorporated, 1932), p. 59.

88 Ibid., p. 49.

and to impress the point on the reader, Anderson must interpolate:

> On some days all the nerves in his body seemed to dance and run with the machines. Without knowing what was happening to him he had fallen into the path of the American genius. For generations before his day, the best brains of America had gone into the making of such machines as he found in the mill. . . .Without quite realizing it, Red had struck upon America at its best, at its finest.[89]

This is a far cry from the dingy bicycle factory, the reconverted pickle works in Poor White, and the perfunctory treatment of Fred Gray's wheel factory in Dark Laughter! The new age had become a challenge to Anderson: "Come on workers," he shouted, "stand together in this. Makers of these modern beautiful machines, stand on your own dignity." Perhaps there will come a time, he added, when the work of men in America will stand with that of other unknown men who built the cathedrals in the Middle Ages.[90]

Anderson delivered this high praise, but at the same time he was concerned with the one-sidedness of the industrial age--"that curious contrast, the care lavished on the machine, the carelessness about human lives."[91] On the one hand he wrote that the time had come when the greater

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89 Ibid., p. 49.

90 Kit Brandon, p. 63.

91 Puzzled America, p. 29.

majority of American workmen had found "actual love of the machines" and love of the factories,[92] on the other hand he confessed that he damned what he had seen there in the old days--"not so old either--little children in the mills at twelve, tired women working all night--the intense speed of the modern machines, nervous exhaustion--. . ."[93] He wrote of the breaking down of the moral fiber of American manhood through the loss of a job, the loss of an essential something in the jobless that can never be measured in dollars; he saw the contradictions of unemployed in a land of plenty, of beautiful highways, fast automobiles, powerful machines and mass production of cheap clothes, books, and household goods contrasted with ugly houses, squalid tenement districts, disease, poverty, crime; he wrote of an age which could give birth to the great wonders of the industrial world, and yet an age whose workmen could not find pride in their accomplishments; he wrote of the orderliness and purpose of the mill in sharp contrast to the life in a mill town, on the streets, in the stores. All these contrasts and contradictions puzzled Anderson so much that he tried to compose his thoughts in two books, Perhaps Women and Puzzled America. In his wanderings

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92 Ibid., p. 108.

93 Ibid., p. 29.

through the Midwest and the South, he found a rich land with its people rich in hunger for a new belief.[94] He found that the basis for aristocracy was money; he wondered if there were any necessity for any one's being broke in a land like this.[95] Anderson found that the machine age was dominating man, and that the roles of servant and master did not favor the tender of the machine. This thought is amplified in Perhaps Women, which was written in "a growing conviction that modern man is losing his ability to retain his manhood in the face of the modern way of utilizing the machine and that what hope there is for him lies in women." Further, his aim was to arouse a real fear and perhaps respect for the machine, both in men and women: "At least if it arouses fear in women something intelligent may be done to save man from the dominance of the machine before his potence, his ability to save himself, is quite gone."[96] Anderson's concern, as expressed in these two works as well as in his novels, has a sound psychological basis. Professor Kimball Young has brought out the fact that when the handicrafts thrived, the workman's tools were almost a part

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94 Ibid., p. xiv.

95 Ibid., p. xiii.

96 Sherwood Anderson, Perhaps Women (New York: Horace Liveright, Incorporated, 1931), Introduction.

of himself and that the product of his work not only was a unified and complete object, but that it involved his entire personality. The modern factory worker operates a machine which makes only a small part of the finished article and often an individual worker has no conception of the finished product as a totality, or thinks of his work as his own creation. Thus, the former pride in skill and workmanship is lost, and the artistry of the product is transferred from the man to the machine.[97] This loss of pride and dignity in work is a major theme of Anderson from first to last, yet in his last two novels he had come to see the reverse side of the picture, that some of the dire effects predicted of the industrial revolution have not been fulfilled. Professor Young states that "the anxiety about the industrial creativeness of the ordinary worker reflects a certain sentimentality regarding the past;"[98] his statement that this arose from a false notion that every craftsman was a potential genius and from a belief that there was some special virtue in the handicrafts and some special vice in machine production reflects Anderson's sentimental rebellion against industry in his earlier novels, and his realization in his later works that

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97 Young, Personality and Problems of Adjustment, p. 594.

98 Ibid., p. 595.

America has gone through a transitional phase in the adaption of workers to machine production. Yet there was still a problem with which Anderson was struggling:

> The mills themselves had that combination of the terrible with the magnificent that is so disconcerting. Anyone working in these places must feel the power of the mills and there is a sense in which all power is beautiful--and also, to be sure, ugly.[99]

Anderson resolved the opposing sides--and here is one of the main theses in the problem of profession and occupation which forms a major part of his novels--"There is always the old question--to make men rise in nobility to the nobility of the machine."[100] This is not, of course, an answer to the problem of profession and occupation, because it raises merely another question. Although Anderson had at least reconciled the working man with the machine, he has laid his finger on one of the major problems of the industrial age and has found that man, with all his great capabilities, has succeeded practically where he has failed morally. Man, in his great inventive genius, has created a new machine-age civilization, but in so doing, has become its slave rather than its master. The fault, Anderson finally realized, lay not in the machine, but in man's inability to utilize it for the greatest possible service to mankind. Materialism is still triumphant over spiritualism.

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99 Puzzled America, p. 147.

100 Loc. cit.

Conclusion

In all of Sherwood Anderson's novels a pattern emerges in the author's moral indictment of the industrial age. He exposed its effect on the lives of the people, he wrote of "the speeding up and the standardization of life and thought, the one impulse no doubt the result of the other."[101] He deplored the lack of free thought brought about by the standardization of magazines and newspapers, with their circulation running into the millions and dominated by advertising accounts and the fact that a level of mediocrity must be maintained to hold their tremendously large circulations, so that "a sort of continual and terrible perversion of life goes on."[102] He was concerned even more for his colleagues in writing who, instead of standing off as prophets to warn of the dangers of the materialistic life, are caught in the same net of standardization as their brother workers in the factory, who subordinate honest reactions to life to tricks of trade in writing. "The writer," Anderson noted, "is perpetually called upon to seem to be doing something while

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101 Sherwood Anderson, Sherwood Anderson's Notebook (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1926), p. 139.

102 Ibid., p. 143.

doing nothing at all. There is the perpetual tragedy of unfulfillment."[103] The tragedy, in Anderson's eyes, was that "such writers are, one and all, men who might have been at least half artists under decent conditions. They have been twisted out of their natural functions as artists."[10] Anderson saw that the danger in such regimentation of thought is "the notion to conform to type is man's highest mission," and that by channeling the minds of men in one rigid groove, America is following the doctrine held in high esteem in Hohenzollern Germany, where they succeeded, Anderson said, in making the doctrine the national ideal after crushing the individuality out of every one.[105]

With this background of Anderson's indictment of the effects of standardization in mind, it becomes easy to trace his thoughts expressed in his champions of individualism: Sam McPherson, Beaut McGregor, Hugh McVey, Joe Wainsworth, Clara Butterworth, Bruce Dudley, Sponge Martin, Red Oliver, and Kit Brandon, to mention only the major characters in his seven novels. Their hatred of the ugliness of the material life about them, their attempts to escape the domination of the industrial age or the

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103 Ibid., p. 145.

104 Ibid., p. 141.

105 Loc. cit.

narrowness and coarseness of the small town or the harsh barrenness of a city devoid of beauty, their search for this beauty and self-expression which often had to cut through the mores of the society of which they were sometimes unwilling members, their hungering for something in which to believe, their longing for dignity and purpose in life which had been denied them by the industrial age--all these are but exemplums of Sherwood Anderson's sermons to the reader in which he pleaded for a pause, for mental stock taking, for a searching of the soul to answer "the most important question the younger generation is asking: Are our lives worth living?"

> Is it living at all to spend all of our best years in helping to build cities larger, increase the number and size of our factories, build up individual fortunes, make more dirt and noise and indulge in an ever-increasingly louder talk of progress?
>
> Or is there a quieter, more leisurely and altogether more charming way of life we might begin to live, here in America, instead of having to run off to Europe to find it?[106]

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106 Ibid., p. 147.

CHAPTER IV

The Problem of the Solution of Man's Social Responsibilities

> Are there people, always from the beginning to the end of life, lonely? What makes it so?[1]

THE SECOND MAJOR THEME of Sherwood Anderson's novels in his exploration of the intricate and subtle relations of an individual to his environment and to other people.[2] In Anderson's writings a reflection of his own loneliness is found; he could set down the frustration, the often desperate attempts of a Hugh McVey, Aline Gray or Kit Brandon to beat down the walls in which they have imprisoned themselves; the lonely mind listening to its own footsteps down dark silent streets, the lonely heart reaching out for understanding but not quite knowing how to effect satis-

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1 Sherwood Anderson, Kit Brandon (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1936), p. 256.

2 "He is studying the means by which this relationship is established, how it is expressed, the use and insufficiency of words in expressing it, the effect upon the individual of his failure to establish such relationships. In exploring this field Anderson incidentally shows the loneliness, the essential isolation of all people, however far they may or may not have gone toward orienting themselves in life." --Cleveland B. Chase, Sherwood Anderson (New York: McBride and Company, 1927), p. 34.

factory communication; for during his early writing days Anderson himself "wanted more than anything to draw close to someone" at a time when the breach between his wife and him was widening in spite of their "furtive and often half-desperate efforts" to draw close to each other, efforts which did not succeed.[3] "Sometimes I think we Americans are the loneliest people in the world," Anderson wrote in his Memoirs,[4] and in a retreat from life he retired to his rooms to bury himself in other, imagined lives, to lose himself in the writing of others, who became more and more real to him as he lost more and more of self.[5] This retreat from the answer to a mystic and illusory question of "Why are people lonely?" is to be found in all of his novels, and a search for a solution was to vex Anderson all of his life. He poured out hundreds of thousands of words in an attempt to make his characters live, so that they might work out the answer for him. "If I could do that I would not be so lonely," he kept telling himself. "I could surround myself with imagined figures so real that

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3 Sherwood Anderson, Memoirs (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1942), p. 187. (See pp. 187-189.)

4 Ibid., p. 6.

5 Ibid., p. 193.

they would be like companions to me."[6] His characters were real to him, for he once wrote that men do not exist in facts, they exist in dreams. Anderson himself existed in his dreams: "Is the moment in which I look down into the loveliness of a woman's eyes less a part of my life because it happened in fancy?"[7] Anderson's brain-children are in a certain way peculiar to his own feelings, and he could write with authenticity of their problems in seeking relationship with others, for he knew what Parrington has termed, in writing of Anderson's works, "the consequence--a black loneliness--the hunger of fellowship and its denial."[8] This hunger is to be found in a marked degree in Anderson's writings, which show that, unlike most persons, who have "only limited capacity for projection, perhaps because they have had limited identifications,"[9] he had the large capacities to transfer his feelings, his desires and his conflicts into print through his characters. That they were not successful in resolving these conflicts

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6 Ibid., p. 222.

7 See Memoirs, p. 116.

8 Vernon Louis Parrington, Main Currents in American Thought, III (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1930), p. 370.

9 Percival M. Symonds, The Dynamics of Human Adjustment (New York: F.S. Crofts and Company, 1940), p. 315.

and desires that Anderson projected is not surprising, for

> on the whole, projection as a mechanism is considered a rather poor kind of adjustment. It may be thought of as an attempt to cure the conflict within the self, but it is an ineffectual cure. . . . Projecting certain characteristics in oneself out onto persons or objects represents a failure to permit awareness of these characteristics in oneself and a failure to manage them.[10]

In a discussion in this chapter of "The problem of the solution of man's social responsibilities," Alfred Adler's definition of "the relationship between the 'I' and the 'you'"--that is to say, "the question whether he has fostered his contact between himself and his fellows in an approximately correct manner or whether he has hindered this contact," will be dealt with. The chapter is divided into three parts: (1) A discussion of Anderson's central characters; (2) the failure of Anderson to face the problem or to find a solution through these characters; and (3) the purpose of the author in writing each novel.

1.

Sherwood Anderson's central characters were not always accurately drawn; they are not what loosely may be

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10 Ibid., p. 316.

called "true to life" because they are not a mirror of himself or of other people; they are, rather, shadowy images of what he wished himself or others to be, and often his characters were stereotyped in vague phrases: There was something about Beaut McGregor "that held the attention."[11] When he walked upon the streets of Coal Creek "his great body inspired fear," and in his blue eyes "anger flashed quick and sudden."[12] His father was "a tall silent man . . . inspiring fear born of hatred."[13] Margaret Ormsby, "like McGregor himself, had not been defeated by life";[14] she was a "natural product of her age and of American life in our times,"[15] but her mother "had never seemed a real part of the life around her."[16] Tom Halsey "was born with a talent,"[17] Kit Brandon had "something in her voice that commanded"[18] and Kate was "the

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11 Sherwood Anderson, Marching Men (New York: John Lane Company, 1917), p. 24.

12 Marching Men, p. 54.

13 Ibid., p. 15.

14 Ibid., p. 189.

15 Ibid., p. 199.

16 Ibid., p. 210.

17 Kit Brandon, p. 126.

18 Ibid., p. 79.

sort of woman men do not trifle with."[19] In Sam McPherson "there was a quality of almost lyrical beauty,"[20] just as there was "something beautiful"[21] about McGregor. Anderson's characters are typed with such repetitious phrases, but in spite of much banality of this sort, often he created, not individuals, but personifications of the universal qualities of greed, repression, ambition, loneliness, frustration, uncertainty, and kindred symbols, just as (at his best) Jane Webster was "a candle that has never been lighted,"[22] and Mary Underwood was "a sort of cinder in the eyes of Caxton."[23] The sensitiveness of Sherwood Anderson to impressions, his groping toward the unknown, that "mystic ejaculation of a mind in quest of itself,"[24] is seen in his attempts to explore the cause of reserve between human beings, to push down the "wall" which barricades

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19 Ibid., p. 179.

20 Sherwood Anderson, Windy McPherson's Son (New York: B.W. Heubsch, Incorporated, rev. ed., 1922), p. 41.

21 Marching Men, p. 122.

22 Sherwood Anderson, Many Marriages (New York: B.W. Heubsch, Incorporated, 1923), p. 20.

23 Windy McPherson's Son, p. 57.

24 Regis Michaud, The American Novel Today: A Sociological and Psychological Study (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1928), p. 155.

them from effective communication and full understanding. He was so baffled by his ineffectiveness to reach out to another that his stories and many of his poems reveal his wild desire to tear down walls, houses, a whole city--anything that separated one from another or from a complete life. His Winesburg, Ohio is a revelation of what happens to people who have repressed their emotions, whose bottled-up passions have left them prey to fear, repressed eroticisms, or frustration. Reflections of this theme are exemplified, to take but one incident from his novels, in Dark Laughter, noticeably in the episode of the Quat'z Arts Ball and the philosophy of Rose Frank, who felt "unclean" after the event because she did not give way to the lust she felt within her.[25] Anderson called repeatedly for a mass catharsis--a public purging of all that is repressed and hidden, as a solution, which is best expressed in Many Marriages:

> There was a deep well within every man and woman and when life came in at the door of the house, that was the body, it reached down and tore the heavy iron lid off the well. Dark hidden things, festering in the well, came out and found expression for themselves, and the miracle was that, expressed, they became often very beautiful. There was a cleansing, a strange sort of renewal within

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25 Page 183.

> the house of the man or woman when the god Life had come in.[26]

2.

Anderson's stories are filled with such symbols as "the wall," "the well," and "the house," which represent repressions and inhibitions which prevent one's normal contact with other people. His central characters are often inarticulate dreamers[27] searching for their place in the world, or ones who seek to be understood without having acquired the ability or means either of understanding themselves or of expressing their thoughts to

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26 Page 217. Other examples of Anderson's use of the catharsis theme include Mike McCarthy's public confession of his sins, which evoked a comment from John Telfer in Windy McPherson's Son that, but for a quirk in his brain, Mike McCarthy "might himself have been a kind of Christ with a pipe in his mouth" (p. 55). Again, in Kit Brandon, Kit was made to say that it was better for all people to be sometime in life openly, even publicly low: "It's better to feel everything you can feel--throw it away" (pp. 25-27, passim), which is an echo of John Webster's thought in Many Marriages, where he thought that it would be "an amazingly beautiful thing" if every living being should by one common impulse commit the most unforgivable sin of which they were conscious: "What a great cleansing time that would be" (p. 33).

27 Often Anderson's characters, especially in his earlier novels, gain a reputation for wisdom and ability because of their inarticulateness. Anderson's first novel describes, for instance, Edwards: "Being a silent man, he had created an impression of remarkable shrewdness

others. What success Anderson had, unlike Sinclair Lewis in his Main Street, lay in his power to express the conflicts of life in terms of personalities by probing their thoughts and emotions by indirect narration or soliloquies, and he was not above stepping into the story himself to draw the reader's attention to a certain problem; he hovers in the wings as an anxious stage manager to prompt his characters with words of advice, comfort or encouragement. Whereas Sinclair Lewis paints sharp pictures of external scenes of a Gopher Prairie, of a house or a street or a Model T Ford--these literary stage props remain but shadowy backgrounds in Sherwood Anderson's works, where the attention is centered either in the characters themselves or their thoughts.

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and ability" (p. 236). Beaut McGregor passed as a mystery in his Chicago boarding house and "by keeping silence he won a reputation for wisdom" (p. 81). Hugh McVey became a hero in the eyes of the townspeople in like manner following a business deal: "His silence made it possible for the people . . . to let their minds take hold of something they thought was truly heroic" (p. 120). Anderson carried his admiration for reserve into his women characters: Mary Underwood, "though different . . . had like Jane McPherson, a habit of silence; and under her silence, she, like Sam's mother, possessed an unusually strong vigorous mind" (p. 58).

This is reminiscent of Anderson's statement of his own mother in A Story Teller's Story, of a woman whose words were filled with "strange wisdom" and who "commanded all of [them] by the strength of her silences" (p. 18). In Marching Men Anderson indulged in a lengthy soliloquy on how man has been defeated by his ability to say words; that "the brown bear in the forest has no such power and the lack of it has enabled him to retain a kind of nobility of bearing sadly lacking in us" (See pp. 122-23).

Anderson failed, however, when he attempted to probe deeper to find motivation for actions or thoughts. He faltered, groped for words and came to an inarticulate halt, baffled in his attempt to express vague and almost indefinable desires. He sought not only to state human problems (which he did successfully), but he attempted to follow Emile Zola's precepts for the naturalistic writer in finding the relations which unite a phenomenon of any kind to its nearest cause. Anderson was going off from the known to the unknown,[28] a courageous venture, but a venture that became elusive and sometimes cloudy in mysticism and symbolism, their outlines to be grasped partly by intuition on the part of the reader, who not

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28 Zola says that "we experimental novelists [have the task of going] from the known to the unknown, to make ourselves masters of nature; while the idealistic novelists deliberately remain in the unknown, through all sorts of religious and philosophical prejudices, under the astounding pretense that the unknown is nobler and more beautiful than the known."--Emile Zola, The Experimental Novel and Other Essays, tr. from the French by Belle M. Sherman (New York: The Cassel Publishing Company, 1893), p. 27.

Zola would have his novelist operate on the characters, the passions, on the human and social data in the same way that the scientists operate on inanimate and living beings; by scientific investigation and experimental reasoning to combat the hypotheses of the idealists so that purely imaginative novels would be replaced by novels of observation and experiment, dominated by determinism (Zola, p. 18). However, to attempt to reduce human nature to a formula, to attempt to find a "nearest cause" in the infinity of inter-related causes and effects of phenomena would necessitate a Brave New World of Aldous Huxley to make it operable.

always is sure he is following the correct path according to the vague guideposts set up by the author. Anderson's characters could not solve the problems of life, because their author could not pin down the nearest cause of the phenomenon. It has been mentioned that Anderson could lead up to a problem, often with great insight, but once having approached it, he could not face it squarely and retreated in confusion with another question instead of an answer. This will be shown in the following paragraph.

Anderson, in his first novel, sent Sam McPherson on a world-wide search for "Truth" after McPherson had realized that the material life had failed him. Anderson's last-page summation is not a statement nor a discovery, but a question: Sam McPherson could only wonder: "Could he surrender to others, live for others?" David Ormsby ends Anderson's second novel with a series of questions, of which the last is "What if McGregor and not myself knew the road to Beauty?" Hugh McVey in the third novel could overcome his inarticulateness so that he was "not self-conscious in the presence of his woman," but although Hugh had at last been brought to Clara, he was "a living if not quite satisfying companion to her." In Many Marriages John Webster sneaks off with his stenographer, his mind full of doubts, bolstering his sagging courage with little pep talks to himself but, as Anderson's spokesman for the

theory of approaching love directly and boldly, finally and reluctantly admits that "it might be that it wouldn't work at all." In Dark Laughter it is Bruce Dudley who runs off with Aline Gray in order to fulfill Anderson's theory of direct love, but no problem is solved; rather, new and more complicated problems are raised. For one thing, after Bruce had won her, he "began almost at once thinking of something else." He still needed to find "the right kind" of work; Aline's going away from Fred was inevitable, Anderson wrote near the conclusion, as had been Bruce's in leaving his wife. "It was her problem but he still had a problem of his own." In both Many Marriages and Dark Laughter Anderson's solution is escape: the two couples, afraid to face life and its problems, run away. Red Oliver in Beyond Desire has to die in order to feel that he is a part of his group and has re-won his dignity and self-respect, and Ethel Long, compelled by pent-up frustration, rushed out of her house to drive madly through the countryside. Kit Brandon, in Anderson's last novel, baffled through 372 pages by a feeling of being separated from others, leaves her homeland still unsatisfied, and only a faint hope is given the reader in the last sentence of the book that "there might be some one other puzzled and baffled young one with whom she could make a real partnership in living."

3.

In his attempts to explore the relationship of one human being to another, Anderson sought to justify the lives of his characters who could not find their place in society by having them search for a "purpose" in life; this is the predominant theme of his first two novels. In Poor White Anderson began to develop his "wall" theory and the book turns away from the central idea of the previous two works--which were stories of a duel between fist and brains--of man's search for a "purpose" in life; and in this third novel the emphasis is not on action, on accomplishment, on rough and tumble business deals in a fast-growing America, but moves from an outer to an inner struggle. In Many Marriages Anderson delivered an almost continuous monologue of a man's attempt to explain to his daughter (and Anderson's attempt to explain to his reader) that one must embrace life to the full; that love between two people, if recognized, should be expressed; that marriage between two people who do not love each other or who do not find satisfaction in physical as well as mental expression of it is not only a sham, but ugly and frustrating as well. This theme forms also the major part of Dark Laughter, in which a secondary theme is carried by Bruce Dudley and his

search for his "purpose" in life, and again the "wall" theme is expressed. Beyond Desire is four stories of mill workers in Southern factories; it is also a tale of frustrations and repressed emotions which Anderson had previously described in the Quat'z Arts Ball episode in Dark Laughter. In Kit Brandon Anderson, returning to the primary theme of his first two novels, emphasized action over mental struggle. The book portrays the cynical, restless America following the first World War, the glorification of the rum-running racket in the south, the effects of industrialization on the character of the people of the cotton mills, wherein--as a previous chapter of this thesis has brought out--man has lost his dignity, self respect, and sense of social responsibility because his work is regarded merely as part of the machine. Here, too, are echoes of Poor White and Dark Laughter, and in Kit Brandon's search for a "purpose in life" Anderson portrayed another Sam McPherson, Beaut McGregor, or Bruce Dudley.

What is this elusive "purpose" that Anderson's central characters pursue? Sam McPherson seeks "Truth" after the material life had failed him, but he seeks in vain through work and charity. At the conclusion of the book and at the end of a world-wide search, he adopts three children, vaguely feeling "that he might be bar-

gaining for an end in life, for purpose to come into his own life,"[29] that he might surrender to others and to live for others; to be able to understand them and to love them.

The single theme which Anderson pounded with sledge-hammer blows into Marching Men is that Americans, individually and collectively, lack unity and orderliness in life. The signs of awakening in the land, he wrote, will be recognized in the "passionate massing of men for accomplishment,"[30] and the "purpose" of Beaut McGregor was to unite men, to create a vast order out of disorder in an idea of "Marching Men," where the petty individuality and helter skelter of cross purposes would be directed and unified in a mystical conception of men walking shoulder to shoulder, out of which "there might arise a greater voice, something to make the waters of the very sea tremble."[31] McGregor's purpose, like Sam McPherson's, reached to his future children to the extent that he at one time had wished to marry a woman he did not love because he felt that she could bear him beautiful children.

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29 Windy McPherson's Son, p. 341.

30 Marching Men, p. 66.

31 Ibid., pp. 277-78, passim.

There are three "purposes" in Poor White. Hugh McVey struggles to find his place in society by becoming an inventor, which "would be the sure way of placing his feet at last upon the path of progress he was trying to find";[32] he sublimates his inarticulateness and lack of success in fostering his contact between himself and his fellows in an approximately correct manner by turning his attention to mechanical problems, the solution of which he felt as "justifying his existence."[33] The need for love and companionship prove stronger, however, and, with McVey's successful struggle to keep his integrity and to escape the dominance of the machine, is finally attained. The second theme is the passing of Clara Butterworth from adolescence into maturity, of a girl who "did not want stupidly to accept life"[34] and for her search for a solution or answer to the new thoughts she was beginning to have about life. The third purpose in Poor White is Anderson's attempt to picture how modern machinery has lightened man's labors, but that it is controlled by industrialists, and that the industrial system, wrongly used, has merely bound over the laborer to a new form of

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32 Poor White, p. 80.

33 Ibid., p. 103.

34 Ibid., p. 165.

slavery--one in which he has been robbed not only of any freedom of thought or action, but of his sense of dignity and accomplishment in work.

The purpose of John Webster in Many Marriages is to give way to the impulses within himself,[35] which in this instance is to seek love and to go toward it directly. But before he runs off with his secretary, he feels compelled to justify his actions to his daughter, "so that she in her turn may learn to live and not close and lock the doors of her being" as Webster felt that his own doors had been locked.[36]

Anderson pursued this theme of erotic sincerity in Dark Laughter, where Bruce Dudley not only wants to find the right woman to marry, but also the right kind of work too. He is a faint echo and a blend of Sam McPherson, Beaut McGregor, and Hugh McVey. Like McPherson, he left a secure job to search for an elusive truth; like McGregor, he wanted to be preeminent in something; and like McVey, he sought for an understanding with his fellow-men. Bruce Dudley is like Anderson, too, a man who "always had buried away a kind of inner tenderness about words, ideas,

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35 Many Marriages, p. 87.

36 Ibid., p. 69.

moods. He had wanted to experiment, slowly, going carefully, handling words as you might handle precious stones, giving them a setting."[37] Bruce, like his three predecessors, also needed security, and in his admiration of the deft tough of a meat cutter, of Sponge Martin's sure movements as he painted wheels, of the craftsman's skill in handling tools and pride in ability at his chosen task, of his own fear of words,[38] one can see a reflection of Anderson's own pride in craftsmanship. Fred Gray, the antithesis of Bruce Dudley, had served as a private in the trenches during World War I, and had come out of it also with a terrible hunger for beauty, security, and companionship in life. But he sought it in retreat:

> Always from the first Fred had wanted a nice, firm little wall built around him. He wanted to be safe behind the wall, feel safe. A man within the walls of a house, safe, a woman's hand holding his hand, warmly--awaiting him. All others shut out by the walls of the house.[39]

In Dark Laughter also is to be found Anderson's purpose of crusading for the craftsman's slowly weakening battle against the forces of industrialism, much as he did in

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37 Dark Laughter, pp. 20-21.

38 "Such tricky, elusive things. It might be that he did not know what he wanted to handle. That might be what was the matter with him. Why not go and find out?" (pp. 24-25.)

39 Dark Laughter, p. 251.

Poor White, symbolized in the former by Sponge Martin and in the latter by Joe Wainsworth.

Anderson's theme of "order" and "purpose" in Beyond Desire and his delight in the precision and beauty of the machines have been noted previously; it has been shown, too, that Anderson was not inconsistent in his shift of values, because he saw in the new Industrial Age the danger of man becoming subservient to the machine and he continued to indict not only the ruthless power of big business and its exploitation of America, but the public and his fellow writers as well for allowing, and even admiring, such leaders and situations. In Beyond Desire is found Red Oliver, who regained his self respect, according to Anderson's views, by dying for it, and Ethel Long, who, much like Esther in Dark Laughter, found that she had failed in life when she lacked courage to approach love directly and purposefully.

Kit Brandon deals with a woman's unfulfilled purpose in a search for human relationship[40] in a background of the cynicism of the post-war period in the Upper South. This universal feeling is, of course, a

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40 "There were times when she terribly wanted a man, not primarily as sex comrade, but as real comrade, some one to creep close to, feel close to, perhaps even a little to command her, direct her" (p. 255).

direct reminder of the feelings of Clara Butterworth in Poor White,[41] and her search for understanding is reminiscent too of the quests of Hugh McVey and Bruce Dudley. Anderson's "wall" theory is directly expressed in many incidents in this last novel, and again the author yearns for a mass revelation to strike every human being at the same time, that it would be "wonderful" if with one accord all the people would discover that it was no fun in being rich in money, land, things, while there was in the world

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41 Anderson philosophized in Poor White that "All men lead their lives behind a wall of misunderstanding they themselves have built, and most men die in silence and unnoticed behind the walls. . . ." (p. 227). On her return from college to her father, "it seemed to [Clara] that the walls of the sleeping-car berth were like the walls of a prison that had shut her away from the beauty of life. The walls, like life itself, were shutting in upon her youth and her youthful desire to reach a hand out of the beauty in herself to the buried beauty in others" (p. 181). Upon meeting her father, she wondered if he would notice the maturity in her; she would be happy if he took her hand in his or if he kissed her, received her into fellowship, or received her as a woman and his daughter by kissing her. "He did neither. They drove in silence through the town . . ." (pp. 194-95).

Hugh's lack of communication is shown in his inability to effect satisfactory relationships with Rose McCoy (pp. 234-239), and during a walk with Clara Butterworth, when he wondered if she will answer his questions. She remained silent and he assumed she did not like him. "Instead Clara walked in silence, thinking of her own affairs and planning to use Hugh for her own ends . . ." (p. 265). When they go off to get married, "realizing a little Hugh's difficulty in expressing what he must feel, she wanted to help him, but when she turned and saw how he did not look at her but continually stared into the darkness, pride kept her silent" (p. 281).

one single being in want.[42] In this novel Tom Halsey had gathered power and modest wealth as head of a rum-running group, but he desired respectability for his son, and wanted him to be what Tom himself, because of his desire for success, was not.

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42 Kit Brandon, p. 221.

Conclusion

The theme of social responsibility as it concerns the relationship of the 'I' and the 'you' is, perhaps, most dominant in Poor White, Dark Laughter, and Kit Brandon, where Hugh McVey and Clara Butterworth, Bruce Dudley and Aline Grey, and Kit Brandon and Alfred Weathersmythe seek understanding, fellowship, and a place in society. In Windy McPherson's Son and Marching Men, however, Anderson wrote at his best on this subject not when he treated individual problems, but when he selected the relationship of society toward individuals as targets to attack. For instance, in writing of the incident in Windy McPherson's Son of Sam McPherson's taking a prostitute to dinner, Anderson was coyly sentimental in the best romantic tradition when picturing the girl,[43] but powerfully effective in lashing out at society for permitting conditions which

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43 She had been deserted and betrayed by her husband for her money; she couldn't find respectable employment to support her little girl; her mother was a hard-working scrub-woman, poor but honest, who "hated dirt; if her dress was dirty her underwear was clean and so was her body," and she taught her daughter to be that way; and, finally, when she didn't want to go on the streets she got down on her knees and prayed for strength "to go on gamely. . . .We are a praying people, we New Englanders," she said. Sam thought that she had a "quality of honesty that he was always seeking in people." See pp. 319-323.

forced women into prostitution: When he left the woman, "Sam had a feeling that he should begin shooting citizens in the streets . . . . He thought of Mike McCarthy, . . . and like Mike, he lifted up his voice in the night:

> . . . Are you there, O God? Have you left your children here on the earth hurting each other? Do you put the seed of a million children in man, and the planting of a forest in one tree, and permit men to wreck and hurt and destroy?[44]

Aside from his main characters who effect satisfactory relationships with each other and with society, Anderson has shown the plight of Mary Underwood and Windy McPherson in contrast to the successful adjustment of John Telfer. Mary Underwood "did not understand the people of Caxton and the people misunderstood and distrusted her. Taking no part in the life of the town and keeping to herself and to her books she awoke a kind of fear in others."[45] As a result, Anderson showed, she became the object of vicious gossip and unfounded scandal which nearly drove her from

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44 Page 323. Another example concerns Sam's thoughts while discussing sex with a group of men. "One of them, he remembered, had maintained stoutly that the scarlet sisterhood was a necessity of modern life and that ordinary decent social life could not go on without it. Often during the past year Sam had thought of the man's talk and his brain had reeled before the thought. In towns and on country roads he had seen troops of little girls come laughing and shouting out of school houses, and had wondered which of them would be chosen for that service to mankind" (p. 315). See pp. 311-317.

45 Page 57.

the town. Further, in a long soliloquy Anderson expanded his views concerning "a certain class of village women", who, "having fallen upon a side light in the life of a Mary Underwood they return to it again and again as a dog to its offal."[46]

Windy McPherson had come out of the Civil War unable to readjust himself; yet while Anderson exposed him as a pitiful braggart and a failure as head of his family, there is found in Anderson's sidelight on the Civil War an undercurrent of sympathy and understanding of the problems of all such Windy McPhersons: "Is it so strange," Anderson asked, that they could not come home again and begin again peacefully painting houses or mending broken shoes? Something in them cried out."

> When our own Thomas Carlyle comes to write of our Civil War he will make much of our Windy McPhersons. He will see something big and pathetic in their hungry search for auditors and in their endless war talk....[47]

John Telfer, who had sublimated his ideal of becoming "a great artist" by dressing in white flannels and white shoes, swinging a cane, made an extraordinary figure in the village, but "it was a part of his programme of life," that of being an artist "practicing the most difficult of all arts--the art of living."[48]

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46 Page 112. See pp. 111-113.

47 Page 20. See pp. 20-22.

48 Pages 11, 14.

Anderson's philosophy in Marching Men of life in the industrial age may be summed up in a typical example from the book:

> We go each of us through the treadmill of our lives caught and caged like little animals in some vast menagerie. In turn we love, marry, breed children, have our moments of blind futile passion and then something happens. All unconsciously a change creeps over us. Youth passes. We become shrewd, careful, submerged in little things. Life, art, great passions, dreams, all of these pass.[49]

The problem of social responsibility is inescapably tied up in Anderson's works as it is, of course, in life, with the problems of profession and occupation, and love and marriage, and to attempt to isolate one of the problems would be to present only a partial picture. Hence, this chapter has been placed as the center of the three major chapters as a focal point; it looks back upon the problem of industry and occupation and anticipates the problem of love and marriage. Only by seeing the three problems as a whole can one unify Anderson's philosophy of life as seen through his characters, and only by viewing man in his relationship to his profession and to women can one see his relationship to society and determine whether he has fostered his contact between him-

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49 Page 275.

self and his fellows in an approximately correct manner or whether he has hinderedthis contact.

In summary, Anderson's use of his central characters to express relationships between individuals, as traced in this chapter, indicates that the first three books may be taken as a unit where his characters, finding that the material life has failed them, seek purpose in life through service to others. The author, however, takes them only to the threshold of a new life and leaves them on the doorstep. In his fourth and fifth novels, Many Marriages and Dark Laughter, Bruce Dudley, Aline Grey, and John Webster try to work out Anderson's theory that love should be approached boldly and directly, but the conclusions are, at best, quite muddled. His last two works, Beyond Desire and Kit Brandon, serve as containers for Anderson's call for a return of dignity to labor, but his characters who search for their place in society fail in their purpose, for Red Oliver can find self-respect only in death, Ethel Long is bound in marriage to a man she does not love, and Kit Brandon's search for happiness remains unfulfilled.

CHAPTER V

The Problem of Love and Marriage

> There is love abundant in the world.
> It may take many roads to expression.[1]

SHERWOOD ANDERSON, perhaps as much as any modern American author, has been called sex-obsessed. His reply was an apology for realism and a matter-of-fact presentation of the subject. This chapter will treat Sherwood Anderson's search for a solution to the problem of love and marriage, the third major theme of his novels.

Because Anderson and his Chicago contemporaries in the 1920s and '30s attempted to bring sex back to what seemed to them its normal place in the picture of life, they were reviled by critics and readers alike. The evaluation of the writings of Anderson in future years will not rest on his ability as a novelist or on his ability even as a craftsman in prose, but future critics surely will take into account the importance of this writer as a pioneer and honor his courage in presenting sincerely

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1 Sherwood Anderson, Marching Men (New York: John Lane Company, 1917), p. 82.

and honestly his convictions of sex at a time when he knew that his writings would meet only hostility and rejection by the majority of critics and the reading public. But why hesitate, he said, "to put down whatever is in men's and women's lives, making the picture whole?"[2] In evaluating Anderson's treatment of the problem of love and marriage, this chapter will be divided into four parts: (1) The placement of Sherwood Anderson as a leader of the literary disciples of Sigmund Freud; (2) a brief summary of the beginnings of the psychoanalytic theory of Sigmund Freud and the relationship of this theory to the writings of Sherwood Anderson; (3) an extract of Anderson's theories of love and marriage in Poor White, Many Marriages and Dark Laughter, his three novels which deal largely with this subject; and (4) an analysis of Anderson's theories of love and marriage as they are expressed through his characters in his seven novels.

1.

During the 1920s, when his popularity was at its height, Sherwood Anderson was regarded as one of the

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2 Sherwood Anderson, Memoirs (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1942), p. 213.

leaders of the literary disciples of Sigmund Freud. This decade--the so-called "Jazz Age"--the era of an unconventional literary emancipation from Victorian romanticism, was under the dominance of a philosophy of cynicism and experimentation with a new form of writing, when "both the novel and the drama threatened to surrender outright to the dominance of psychological analysis and theories of motivation inspired by Freud, Jung, Adler, and Havelock Ellis."[3] It was a time when the normal in life was examined minutely for clues to the abnormal. Writing in the youth of the age of science, naturalistic writers such as Waldo Frank, Evelyn Scott, Conrad Aiken and Sherwood Anderson wrote harsh prose which delved into the abnormal or the subconscious realms of human activity in search of motivation and cause for human behavior, and the result was the growth of the Freudian psychological novel. "For the romance and spiritual elevation of a great self-giving love there was substituted a cold, scientific, matter-of-fact attitude which reduced it from divinity to a biological function common to all animal life."[4]

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3 Harlan Hatcher, Creating the Modern American Novel (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, Incorporated, 1935), p. 172.

4 Loc. cit.

That Sherwood Anderson deliberately and consciously made use of Freudian principles in Winesburg, Ohio is too well known to require documentation in this thesis, for almost every character is abnormal, and the overt actions of these frustrated characters are explained in terms of sexual repression. Anderson took up the theme from Winesburg, Ohio, and incorporated them in Poor White, Dark Laughter, Beyond Desire, and Kit Brandon; and in Many Marriages he devoted the entire book to explain his ideas on the effects of sexual inhibition and on what he believed to be social hypocrisy on the subject of sex. In order to understand his use of Freudian principles, which will form the body of later sections of this chapter, a brief outline of Sigmund Freud's theory of psychoanalysis will be given here.

2.

Psychoanalysis began with Freud in 1892, and the basic principles he started with were: Determinism--an exploration to determine the source of a phenomenon, and from that to trace whatever motivations lay behind it; symptoms, as explained in this theory, were not haphazard or meaningless, but had a psychic cause; The Subconscious--

in which the origin of the symptoms was hidden from the patient, and operated underground; and Suppression--in which conflicting emotions or unpleasant memories served as the reason for pushing the origin of the symptom into the subconscious and substituting another emotion or behavior as compensation, the result of which played havoc with a normal peace of mind.[5]

Freud's theories were developed following a demonstration of the disappearance of hysterical impairments under hypnosis at a meeting in Paris in 1885, although his interest was in the neurosis, not in the hypnosis. The "School of Paris" under Charcot, and the "School of Nancy" under Bernheim, were interested in observing and recording the symptoms of neuroses; Freud, however, sought the cause of the phenomena, the why of the symptoms. He declined to accept the symptoms of hysterics at their face value; his was a more dynamic approach than that of Charcot and Janet, which was descriptive and expository, with no effective curiosity as to the source and meaning of clinical symptoms.[6]

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5 Joseph Jastrow, Freud: His Dream and Sex Theories (Cleveland and New York: The World Publishing Company, 1940), p. 13.

6 Ibid., p. 12.

After research and observation, Freud announced in 1892 his "hysterical impairment" theory (i.e., a neurotic invalid is not a neurotic invalid; hence the search for some other mechanism);[7] Emile Zola's treatise on naturalism in literature--a theory which also sought an underlying cause for an overt action--appeared in the following year. Thus, while Freud was blazing a new trail in psychology, a trail which was to lead into psychoanalysis, Zola pioneered a contemporary parallel path in literature, and led his followers into naturalism. A further parallel may be ventured here in assuming that Charcot and Bernheim, faithfully and objectively observing and recording the symptoms of neuroses, were realists (or what Zola would term "observers"); Freud, by seeking to interpret the symptoms--without deviating from the facts--by delving into the <u>why</u> to ascertain the nearest or determining cause of the phenomena--was a naturalist (or what Zola would term "experimentalist"). Freud's probings for the cause behind the symptom in order to arrive at an interpretation was an example in science of what Zola was trying to do for literature. Zola wrote that

> The observer relates purely and simply the phenomena which he has under his eyes . . . he

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7 <u>Ibid</u>., p. 18.

> should be the photographer of phenomena, his observations should be an exact representation of nature and he writes under its dictation. But once the fact is ascertained and the phenomenon observed, reason intervenes, and the experimentalist comes forward to interpret the phenomenon.[8]

This line of reasoning has been followed by modern psychological novelists in America. As Freud once sought to know why hysterics behave as they do, so Sherwood Anderson asked "How did one ever happen to get married anyway?"

> How did it come about? What did people think they were up to when they did it? What made a man, after he had known dozens of women, suddenly decide to marry a particular one?[9]

Anderson kept asking why? in all of his novels, short stories and poems; he brooded over the riddle, he indulged in flights of fancy until his dreams became more real than his actual experiences, he "wanted passionately to understand and get straight the crooked lives of all those eccentric people he had met":

> Why were they so odd, so lonely, so melancholy in their sense of aloneness and separateness, so unable to break out of their confinement to establish free contact with other human beings? Why were they driven to moon about in the rain, to lie in a cornfield, or to stand before the door of a woman with hand uplifted to knock, only to become suddenly inhibited and run away, like Hugh McVey on his wedding night? The answers to all these questions and the explana-

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8 The Experimental Novel, p. 7.

9 Sherwood Anderson, Dark Laughter (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1925), p. 146.

tion of all conduct were in the early days of Sherwood Anderson's writings to be had from Sigmund Freud.[10]

3.

The writing of Winesburg, Ohio (1919), marked the turning of Anderson toward a shift of his subject matter and purpose. Windy McPherson's Son was an expose of Big Business and, indirectly, Anderson's search for "Truth"; Marching Men was a sociological novel of labor and Anderson's protest against the disordered ineffectiveness of the American scene and a plea for unity in which the password, incessantly repeated, is "order and purpose!" Winesburg, Ohio, his next work, became a "psychological document of the first importance,"[11] and "possibly the first fictional work in America to exemplify the conscious and deliberate use of Freudian principles."[12]

After 1919 Anderson was to turn the emphasis in his novels from the American scene itself, and following his own examples in Winesburg, Ohio, he narrowed his scope: Sam

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10 Harlan Hatcher, The Modern American Novel, pp. 166-67.

11 Cleveland B. Chase, Sherwood Anderson (New York: McBride and Company, 1927), p. 31.

12 Walter Blair, Theodore Hornberger, and Randall Stewart, The Literature of The United States (Scott, Foresman and Company, 1947), p. 832.

McPherson, international financier, and Beaut McGregor, leader of a nation-wide labor movement--both with their vast problems set in the background of the swift expansion of the industrial age--were set aside. Anderson now became obsessed by the action of the subconscious, "by a study of morbid psychology."[13] The first of this new type of novel is Poor White. While he pictured in Poor White the effect of the growth of industrialism in the town of Bidwell, and through it what was happening to all the towns of the Midwest, he was concerned more with the effect of industrialism on the people as individuals, and the value of the novel "resides in the Freudian sketches aside from the main plot, and in the analysis of the pathological forms of sensibility."[14] Seven characters or incidents have been selected for discussion in the following paragraphs.

(1) Hugh McVey. His search for love and understanding is a central theme of the novel. His frustration and isolation are early brought out in the novel. When he was a young man, for example, he had once watched a farmer's daughter and her fiance kiss. His imagination was inflamed and he tried to picture himself in the position of the young city

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13 Regis Michaud, The American Novel Today (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1928), p. 181.

14 Ibid., p. 182.

man. "His body shook as with a chill and he was half ill of jealousy, anger, and an overpowering sense of defeat."[15] He indulged in flights of romantic fancies following a few casual words from an unknown school teacher;[16] on warm spring evenings he tried to imagine himself "clean-limbed, graceful, agile"; he thought of "how powerfully he could hold the body of a woman against his body and the spark of fires of spring that had touched him became a flame,"[17] but when he met Clara Butterworth he was overcome with shyness. "I've been lonely, all my life I've been lonely," he thinks. "I want to find my way into some one's heart, and she is the one."[18] He wanted to ask many questions: "That's what I want a woman for. I want some one close to me who understands things and will tell me about them."[19]

(2) Clara Butterworth. The last two-thirds of the book are devoted in a large part to her awakening maturity, her post-adolescent confusion over her half-understood desires[20]

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15 Poor White, see pp. 33-35.

16 Ibid., pp. 65-66.

17 Ibid., pp. 76-77.

18 Ibid., p. 292.

19 Ibid., p. 264.

20 See pp. 147-50, 173, 190, 194, 246, etc.

and her dreams of the "right man". Anderson introduced several typed "wrong" men,[21] whom she rejects. She marries Hugh McVey, an act which complicates her problem because of the lack of understanding between them and the inability of either to break down the wall of reserve between them. Their wedding feast, arranged by her father, had turned into an occasion for vulgarity which became an agony of embarrassment. Afterwards, when she thought of it, she could remember it only "as a horsey affair,"[22] and her dreams of the beautiful men and women who were meant to come at this time were shattered in disillusionment.[23]

(3) Rose McCoy. The story of the schoolteacher, whose relationship with Hugh McVey is a vignette separate from the main plot, centers in a delicately told tale of frustration

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21 See pp. 157, 166-67, 172-73.

22 Page 300. "With a growing sense of bitterness she realized that all her life, all through her girlhood and young womanhood, she had been waiting for this, her wedding night, and that now, having come, the occasion for which she had waited so long and concerning which she had dreamed so many dreams, had aborted into an occasion for the display of ugliness and vulgarity. . . .Clara felt like an animal driven into a corner and surrounded by foes." (pp.296-97.)

23 "The beautiful men and women of the dreams were meant to come at this time, that's what the dreams were about; but, like the unborn child that ran with outstretched hands, they cannot get over the bridge and into the house," she thought vaguely. (p. 296.)

that might have been lifted intact from the pages of Winesburg, Ohio. Again a wall of reserve held the couple apart, and the subconscious longings of each for the other could find no expression.

(4) Another complete tale in Poor White reminiscent of Winesburg, Ohio is a picture of a childless couple, Mr. and Mrs. Henderson Woodburn, a story that in a little more than a page tells all there is to tell of sterility not only in marriage but in living itself. He brings home papers and adds up figures in the evening; she occupies her time knitting baby socks--and lays them away with hundreds of others stored in bureau drawers. "Theirs was a house of silence." Toward Clara Butterworth, their neice, who could find no way of expressing to her shocked aunt the new thoughts she was beginning to have about life, their attitude was as equally sterile: "Let's be polite, but act as though she didn't exist."[24]

(5) Kate Chancellor, the antithesis of Mrs. Woodburn, presents another phase of Anderson's philosophy of love and marriage: "Why do men and women have to fight each other? Why does the battle between them have to go on?"[25]

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24 Poor White, pp. 187-88, passim.

25 Ibid., p. 171.

Kate Chancellor--"striding along the street like a man," thrusting her hands into her skirt pockets, swearing like a man, presented another side of the sex problem to Clara, whom Kate wanted for herself. Yet Kate's summation of sex and her rejection of the answer she had resolved[26] was not satisfactory to Clara. Between her aunt, in whom "there was something soft, small, round, insistent, both terribly weak and terribly strong about the completely feminine thing she had made of herself or that life had made of her"[27] and the bold, vigorous, masculine Kate Chancellor, Clara Butterworth found no word to comfort her or to untangle her confusion into orderly lines; she could but keep her hope that "one should be able . . . to find somewhere a man who respects himself and his own desires but can understand also the desires and fears of a woman."[28]

(6) Another story of two lives is told in a snapshot, a paragraph, as complete a revelation as a flash of lightning which etches a vivid retained picture out of a dark night

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26 "Kate was a bold, vigorous thinker," Anderson wrote, "and was striving to grope her way through her own problem in life. . . ." (p. 189). Kate had decided that men wanted "a certain thing from women. It is delicate and easy to kill. Love is the most sensitive thing in the world. It's like an orchid. Men try to pluck orchids with ice tongs, the fools," (pp. 171-72, passim).

27 Poor White, p. 190.

28 Ibid., p. 173.

before blackness blots the scene again: A middle-aged couple, nameless, are climbing a hill. The man plods up, grumbling at his wife, who paid no attention to his words, saving her breath for the labor of walking, "and as for the matter of marriage, that had been attended to. She saw no reason to waste words over the matter."[29]

(7) The story of Smoky Pete Fry is still another Freudian short sketch unrelated to the main plot of Poor White; it is a reminder of Mike McCarthy of Windy McPherson's Son; it is a tale left over from Winesburg, Ohio. Smoky Pete Fry, the blacksmith: "forerunner of the modern city newspaper reporter in his love for taking the center of the stage in order to drag into public sight the misfortunes of his fellows . . ."[30] When he gleefully found some morsels with which to assail the reputation of Tom Butterworth, he learned that his own worthless son had been given a chance to make something of himself by Butterworth. He had evidently misjudged the character of his son, he thought; had he made a mistake too about Tom Butterworth? But his information was swelling in his breast; he purged his emotion by delivering his denunciation--alone at night in a cow pasture, during a driving rainstorm.

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29 Ibid., p. 272.

30 Ibid., p. 219.

The foregoing seven examples chosen from Poor White are typical of Anderson's characters, of the problems they faced, and of how they met those problems. Hugh McVey's yearning for love and understanding, his frustrations, his search for happiness in marriage is similar to that of Sam McPherson, Beaut McGregor and Bruce Dudley. Clara Butterworth is an earlier Kit Brandon; she is another Edith Carson, the milliner. In describing Clara's adolescent emotions, Anderson approached the sensitive best of his short stories. The failure of Clara to achieve a fully satisfactory marriage lay in two things: "The wall" which she had raised in front of her, and her motive in marrying Hugh McVey. There was a wall between Clara and her father, Kate, her husband, the Woodburns.

> . . . When her aunt spoke to her and tried with her feeble hands to tear some stones out of the wall that was being built between them . . . Clara . . . feeling as though she would like almost to weep . . . saw no possibility of explaining to her aunt the new thoughts she was beginning to have about life and did not want to hurt her by trying. "How can I explain my thoughts when they're not clear in my own mind, when I am myself just groping blindly about?"[31]

When McVey proposed marriage, she felt like laughing, but "then what was in her of her father's shrewdness came to her rescue." She accepts him because she felt it was her last

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31 Ibid., pp. 189-90.

chance, but she did not love him. She wanted to help Hugh--"marriage had perhaps given her that impulse, but she did not follow it. . ."[32] --and a wall of silence, much like that described between Fred and Aline Gray in Dark Laughter,[33] builds up between them. In telling the story of Clara Butterworth, Anderson attempted to reason out her desire for marriage, and probed into the thoughts which she would not admit even to herself. "Hugh was what she wanted to be," Anderson wrote. "He was a creative force. In his hands dead inanimate things became creative forces. He was what she wanted not herself but perhaps a son to be."[34] There

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32 Ibid., p. 314.

33 Anderson described a typical evening with the Fred Greys: "In the evening after dinner he looked at her and she looked at him. What was to be said? There was nothing to talk about. . . .How could they talk. There wasn't anything special to be said." (p. 282. See also pp. 189-92, 175, and 205.) These passages are similar to those depicting the early married life of the McVeys, when "dense silence brooded and [Clara] and Hugh, together were silent. . . . When words came they did not break the silence. The wall remained." Hugh, like his counterpart in Dark Laughter, talked shop, empty, meaningless words. "Hugh did not want to talk of the work at the shop, but could find words for no other talk." (pp. 332-33, passim.) The result was that "his hands had builded a wall and the passing days were huge stones put on top of the wall." (p. 316.) These passages are reminiscent of Anderson's poem "The Man in The Brown Coat" in A New Testament where he wrote of his own life ". . . why in all our life together have I never been able to break through the wall to my wife? Already I have written three hundred, four hundred thousand words. Are there no words for love? . . ." (p. 76.)

34 This desire is similar to that of Sam McPherson and Beaut McGregor in Anderson's two earlier novels. In the last novel, Tom Halsey wants his son to be what he himself can not be.

was something back of her desire for a man, Anderson reasoned. "She wanted something more than caresses. There was a creative impulse in her that could not function until she had been made love to by a man. The man she wanted was but an instrument she sought in order that she might fulfil herself."[35]

Allied with the story of Clara Butterworth's search for love is her thoughts of her mother's relationship to her father--Anderson's theme of woman's submission to man. All of her life Clara's mother had submitted to her husband, Anderson wrote, and--like the author's own mother and so many of the mothers and wives in his novels--[36] died of overwork as a kitchen drudge.

In the story of Rose McCoy Anderson was more than the observer who, according to Zola's precept, "relates purely and simply the phenomena which he has under his eyes." He went further. Still following Zola's direction, he stepped

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35 Poor White, p. 250. Compare Beaut McGregor's statement in Marching Men that although he wanted Edith Carson, he would marry Margaret Ormsby: "Her beauty has won me. I follow beauty. I want beautiful children. That is my right. . . . Look at Edith. Do you think she could bear children to me?" (p. 243.)

36 For Anderson's account of the hard life of his own mother, see Memoirs, pp. 20 and 27, and A Story Teller's Story, p. 25, of ". . .a mother who is to die, outworn and done for at thirty--." Windy McPherson's Son and Marching Men have similar incidents.

forward as experimentalist to interpret the phenomenon, and attempted in a digression to the reader to explain McVey's failure to surmount his wall of reserve in order to win the love of Rose McCoy. "Had Hugh been able," Anderson summarized, "to creep like a moonbeam into the presence of the sleeping schoolteacher, he must inevitably have loved her." Anderson went further still; anxiously he pointed out both a warning as well as the moral of the story:

> Also he would perhaps have understood that it is best to approach human beings directly and boldly as he had approached the mechanical problems by which his days were filled. Instead he sat by his window in the presence of the moonlight night and thought of women as being utterly unlike himself.[37]

In his next novel, Anderson had John Webster approach Natalie Swartz "directly and boldly", and in Dark Laughter it is Bruce Dudley who walks off directly and boldly with Aline Grey under the nose of her husband. Fred Grey was too much like Hugh McVey at this point: Hugh, "when his fancy made for him a picture of the school teacher Rose McCoy sleeping in a bed, . . . saw her only as a chaste white thing to be worshipped from afar and not to be approached, at least by himself;"[38] Fred, when he had asked Aline to marry him, could see, in that little park in Paris, the

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37 Poor White, p. 55.

38 Ibid., p. 236.

white stoned women--"angels"--on the roof of Notre Dame cathedral, and he had visions of her as a small, old-fashioned white marble statue people used to set on pedestals among green foliage in a garden.[39] In Poor White, Tom Halsey, needing a woman to nurse his child, presented his baby to the minister's woman and walked off with her in front of the minister and the congregation. In Anderson's eyes, the grovelling preacher's cries of "God, don't let her go!" was far outweighed by Halsey's motto that "God takes care of the man who takes care of himself."[40]

Anderson always had a secret admiration for bold and successful lovers. In his Memoirs he mentioned his "rather intense boyish admiration" for his roommate, John, during his early days in Chicago. Anderson himself was continually falling in love; he would follow a woman walking in the street although, he admitted in his autobiography, "had she noticed me, turned and spoken to me, I would have been frightened. On the other hand, John . . . was bold and successful."[41] In compensation, Anderson placed himself in

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39 Dark Laughter, p. 174.

40 See Poor White, pp. 150-64.

41 Memoirs, pp. 113-14, passim. In Perhaps Women, he further idealized: "Your male should be the adventurer. He should be careless of possession, throw them aside." (p. 57.)

the characters he created. A clue for this projection may be found in Perhaps Women where, in a typical mood of self-analysis, he wrote:

> I am not a large man in my own consciousness of myself, although, to some of my friends, I seem at times to appear physically large.
>
> In my own consciousness of myself I am, often enough, a peculiarly small and ineffectual man. "That may be the reason," I say often to myself, "that I wrote so boldly."
>
> "I am trying," I tell myself, "to find in words a boldness not in myself."[42]

Thus, Sam McPherson easily was made to utter "a blunt declaration . . . 'I have been thinking we might marry, you and I'" to Sue Rainey. "'You get things done, don't you?" she replied smiling.[43] Beaut McGregor, "single minded and primitive," who "had not been defeated by life," bluntly asked Margaret Ormsby, daughter of a powerful financier, to help him. Anderson seemed as overwhelmed with admiration for the audacity of his hero as Margaret: "A hot wave, half anger, half admiration, swept over her." As if that were not enough, the hot wave which swept over her left her with another thought: ". . . he is no child--that McGregor. He is a child of nothing. He stands on a rock unshaken."[44]

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42 Sherwood Anderson, Perhaps Women (New York: Horace Liveright, Incorporated, 1931), p. 95.

43 Marching Men, p. 185.

44 Ibid., pp. 189-92, passim.

In Beyond Desire Anderson continued his fancy of bold lovers by means of a letter from a companion to Red Oliver to the effect that every man ought to make the search for his woman in a new way, "more fearlessly than in the old way. If the world were ever to be made sweet again," Anderson said, "they had first of all to learn to be fearless and even reckless. They had to be life lovers who would throw even life itself into the game."[45] These thoughts are, of course, extensions of Anderson's ideas which he had expounded previously in Dark Laughter and Many Marriages.[46]

To summarize this analysis of the chosen incidents from Poor White, an attempt has been made to show that in each of them, serving as typical examples of Anderson's writings, he has exposed, first, the unconscious motives and unconscious mechanisms in adult attitudes and behavior, an exposure which originated with Sigmund Freud and which has been termed one of his "most significant contributions";[47]

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45 Beyond Desire, p. 9.

46 In Dark Laughter, for instance, Aline Grey is fascinated by "a sharp sense of something in French life," a matter-of-fact acceptance of life and love, as it were; Americans, she thought, "were sentimental fools about women" (pp. 164-67, passim). Kit Brandon thinks: "How American her husband was. . . .Oh, what have American women not had to stand from American men!" (p. 324). See also Perhaps Women, passim.

47 Kimball Young, Personality and Problems of Adjustment (New York: F.S. Crofts and Company, 1940), p. 282.

and second, he has made use of Emile Zola's theory of attempting to interpret the underlying cause for an overt action once he had exposed it. Anderson's characters are Freudian characters, lonely, suppressed, frustrated, pining for love and understanding; they crave fulfillment, yet they are afraid of love. And Anderson understood, with a great compassion for these characters of his, that "we all need to be loved, What would cure one would cure the rest of us also. The disease is universal. We all want to be loved and the world has no plan for creating our lovers."[48]

"There are a thousand things in life no one rightly understands," Anderson once wrote; "love has as many branches as a tree."[49] In Many Marriages, his second novel which deals primarily with the subject of love and marriage, he boldly trod an unconventional path or, to follow his simile, he climbed a branch of the tree where few have dared to go. And in so doing, he left himself out on a limb. Outwardly, the novel is exactly what Parrington expressed: "A clumsy account of a Babbitt gone on a psychological spree."[50]

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48 Quoted from Sherwood Anderson's story, "Seeds" by N.B. Fagin, The Phenomenon of Sherwood Anderson (Baltimore: The Rossi-Bryn Company, 1927) p. 124.

49 Sherwood Anderson, Many Marriages (New York: B.W. Heubsch, Incorporated, 1923), p. 83.

50 Vernon Louis Parrington, Main Currents in American Thought, III (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1930), p. 320.

Inwardly, it is Anderson's sincere plea for the open recognition of beauty and love in sex, but the author's sincerity was not strong enough to bear the weight of his philosophy, so that his message became obscured in incoherent mysticism and symbolism, and finally disintegrated in the last chapter. In this novel Anderson often verged on the ridiculous and sometimes succeeded in accomplishing it.

The main theme which Anderson pursued was a quest for sexual "truth" much as Sam McPherson's more conventional search for a purpose in life. Anderson's thesis in Many Marriages was to set down a story of sexual inhibition, and as much as he could of its cause and effect; it was an attempt to portray one who had the courage to defy public opinion and the moral standards of his age in refusing to "deny life". John Webster, middle-class washing machine manufacturer in a middle western town, found that life had passed him by, and hurried to catch up to it. Like prophets and mystics of old--and, of course, like Sherwood Anderson--he had his ecstatic visions; at one time, for instance, when "he felt suddenly like a young prophet come out of some far strange clean land to visit with the blessing of his presence the people of the street" a thought, "a great hope" flared in him:

> A time will come when love like a sheet of fire will run through the towns and cities. It will

that "the god of denial had won the victory. To reach his throne-room one went through long hallways of evasion. . . ."[53] Because of this denial of life, there can be no "purpose" in living: "Men and women either spend their lives going in and out of the doors of houses and factories or they own houses and factories and they live their lives and find themselves at last facing death and the end of life without having lived at all."[54] The thought is familiar to the reader of Anderson's previous novels, but in Many Marriages he dug underground and came up with the idea of repression:

> In every human body there is a great well of silent thinking always going on. Outwardly certain words are said, but there are other words being said at the same time down in the deep hidden places. There is a deposit of thoughts, of unexpressed emotions. How many things are thrown into the deep well, hidden away in the deep well!
>
> There is a heavy iron lid clamped over the mouth of the well. When the lid is safely in place one gets on all right. One goes about saying words, eating food, meeting people, conducting affairs, accumulating money, wearing clothes, one lives an ordered life.
>
> Sometimes at night, in dreams, the lid trembles, but no one knows about that.[55]

John Webster, like a modern Saul converted, saw the light,

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53 Many Marriages, p. 192.

54 Ibid., p. 88.

55 Ibid., p. 155.

found new life in the eyes of a woman, and had the courage to throw off the lid of the well, to recognize his unexpressed emotions and to release them in renunciation of his business, his wife and friends. His wife had neither the courage nor the understanding to follow him; "Why should there be those who desire to tear the lid off the wells," she cried, "to break through the walls? Things had better be left as they are. Those who disturb the heavy iron lids should be killed."[56]

In this novel Anderson knew no division between flesh and spirit that does not parch the one and kill the other, Henry S. Canby notes.

> Like Bunyan, he is willing that his pilgrim shall save himself even if he kills his wife, disrupts his home, wrecks his business, and puts dangerous knowledge in the immature mind of his daughter. But it is not salvation elsewhere but life here that he proposes, more life, more love, with the possibility of attaining a freedom of mind by which loving heart meets loving heart and exchanges life currents unhampered by fear, convention, or false shame . . . Anderson would let society as it is go to the devil, but only if it cannot permit free flowering of love and life here and now. Our minds now die before their bodies. If a wife, dead already in mind and emotion, kills herself because her husband leaves her, what is the loss? If a man, escaping the fate of many marriages, finds renewal of youth in another love, who has suffered as much as he has gained?[57]

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56 Loc. cit.

57 Henry S. Canby, Definitions (Second Series), (New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1924), p. 246.

In Many Marriages Anderson has worked in the intricacies of sex, but--and here is what value there is in the book--he "relates sex to life instead of immersing life in the sex instinct."[58]

Anderson continued his theme in his next novel, Dark Laughter. The roles of John and Mary Webster are reversed in Anderson's sequel: It is Aline Grey who in Anderson's philosophy had the courage to go out openly to meet life. She had much of the qualities of the earlier John Webster in her that she too had kept tightly shut the lid over the thoughts and dreams stirring in the well within her.[59] Her husband, like Mary Webster, retreated further into his secure dream world of an ideal as Aline overcame her repressions, and kept tightly shut the lid over the well: "What one wanted from woman was not a conscious participation in the facts of life--its vulgarities. . ."[60] Dismayed,

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58 Ibid., p. 248.

59 "Outwardly she was all [Fred] expected. That was hardly the point," Anderson noted. "One couldn't prevent oneself having thoughts. There might be nothing in life but just that -- living--seeing the days pass--being a wife and perhaps presently a mother--dreaming--keeping the thing, down inside, in order. If one couldn't keep it in order at least one could keep it out of sight. (P. 134.)

60 Sherwood Anderson, Dark Laughter (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1925), p. 197.

confused, as helpless as Mary Webster in the face of Anderson's theory of reality, clinging fiercely to his idealism, his thought was a virtual echo of John Webster's wife: "We've got to believe in things--kill people who don't believe."[61]

The marriage of Fred and Aline Grey is a study in contrast. They met in Paris shortly after the first World War. Aline had wanted "to be in something--up to the hilt--the limit--once, anyway. She had got into--a marriage with Fred Grey."[62] Fred "was like a child, wanting something she stood for--to him--wanting it desperately."[63] He married his dream of what he had wanted Aline to be: Security, respectability, a haven where he could shut out the ugly realities of life, but he married, not the Virgin, but Venus. In the resultant insecurity of his home life, he transferred his dream of security to his factory, where he could play at being ruler in his well-defined and comfortably familiar business kingdom, still shut out from reality, engaged in the problem of fighting down within himself all doubts, all questions of his shaky relationship with his wife, and of her relationship with another man who had the courage to approach her boldly.

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61 Ibid., p. 201.

62 Ibid., p. 203.

63 Ibid., p. 201.

This section has shown Anderson's theories of love and marriage as expressed in his history of the lives of three couples: Clara and Hugh McVey, John and Mary Webster, and Fred and Aline Grey. Anderson's purpose in Poor White has previously been summarized; his theses in Many Marriages and Dark Laughter may be taken as a unit, in which Anderson came forth with a radical idea that one, to escape death of the mind before death snuffs out the life of the body, should open the lid of the well, express all hidden emotions, and go forth to seek life and love directly. Anderson's idea is hidden in mysticism and symbolic meanings and often is not easy to follow except by indirect references and allusions. Both novels are often sordid in details and undoubtedly have proved shocking to many readers, but Anderson's integrity and sincerity in writing should not be doubted. To understand more completely his philosophy of love and marriage, one should follow his theories as he revealed them in his other writings.[64] The following section will analyse Anderson's ideas as he expressed them through other characters in his seven novels.

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64 For example, see pp. 49 and 50, Perhaps Women.

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To John Telfer in Windy McPherson's Son, love and marriage were handicaps to the artist, "who had better let the women and girls alone" because they are at war with him and have a different purpose than he: They believe "that the pursuit of women is an end for a life."[65] John Telfer, "the orator, the dandy, the only man in town, except Mike McCarthy, who kept his trousers creased," was "on to women"; he and his wife were "the most successful married pair in Caxton", still in love and as considerate of each other as sweethearts, and she, "unlike most of the wives in Caxton," never questioned his private life but left him to come and go to live his own life while she attended to her millinery business.[66] John Telfer, shallow, pompous, village dandy and self-appointed chairman of any town meeting, lover of life and beauty and cracker-barrel philosopher, is one of Anderson's major spokesmen and expresses for the first time in the novels one of the major themes on sex: that in America sexual love is repressed and

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65 Sherwood Anderson, Windy McPherson's Son (New York: B.W. Heubsch, Incorporated, rev. ed., 1922), p. 69.

66 Ibid., pp. 10-11.

hidden, a result of which is the accompanying overt manifestations of neuroticism and frustration; that sex, when it is brought into the open, is treated with a crude vulgarity and embarrassed levity. Telfer draws a picture of a typical villager, "a sample of life in this town," who pretended to be filled with disgust at the mention of the word love:

> He will talk of corn or steers or of the stinking hides that he buys but at the mention of the word love he is like a hen that has seen a hawk in the sky. He runs about in circles making a fuss. "Here! Here! Here!" he cries, "You are making public something that should be kept hidden. You are doing in the light of day what should only be done with a shamed face in a darkened room."[67]

The tragedy, in Anderson's eyes, was the effect of this attitude on adolescents in America's towns and villages, where, left alone by their elders with "characteristic what-boots-it attitude toward the needs of childhood", boys and girls got through their instincts, "crudely and without guidance, their first peep at the mystery of life." Unnaturally aroused by the emotions they had unknowingly unleashed, thinking thoughts, they had lost their keenness for fun, "and people seeing them nodded their heads and said, 'It is the loutish age'".[68]

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67 Ibid., pp. 66-67.

68 Ibid., pp. 71-72, passim.

A second theme of Anderson, that a primary purpose of women in life is to bear children, was expressed by Mike McCarthy who, having been jailed for killing a husband and committing adultery with the man's wife, voices his philosophy in a long soliloquy through the bars of his cell to an audience of townspeople assembled outside. "I have a philosophy of life," he shouted in prayer; "I have seen men and women living year after year without children. I have seen them hoarding pennies and denying Thee new life on which to work Thy will." Secretly he visited twelve of Caxton's childless wives, "talking of carnal love." Telfer insisted that young Sam McPherson stay to hear the tirade, arguing that the boy had heard enough lies in the town and that "truth won't hurt him". McCarthy, who in Anderson's interpretation was "trying to work something out", continued:

> Oh Father! Help us men of Caxton to understand that we have only this, our lives, this life so warm and hopeful and laughing in the sun, this life with its awkward boys full of strange possibilities, and its girls with their long legs and freckles on their noses, that are meant to carry life within themselves, new life, kicking and stirring and waking them at night.[69]

Anderson not only endorsed McCarthy's philosophy, he seemed to underscore it through Sam McPherson and John Telfer.

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69 Ibid., pp. 52-53, passim.

Sam, listening, "felt that he had been shriven. His mind, his heart, even his tired body seemed strangely cleansed. . . . In the midst of the blasphemy of Mike McCarthy he had sensed a deep and abiding love of life." Telfer, who felt that even a man like Mike McCarthy, half insane as he was, kept "instinctively trying to justify himself before God," and adds a note:

> The world will some day grope its way into some kind of an understanding of its extraordinary men. Now they suffer terribly. In success or in such failures as has come to this imaginative, strangely perverted Irishman their lot is pitiful. It is only the common, the plain, unthinking man who slides peacefully through this troubled world."[70]

As Dark Laughter was the sequel to Many Marriages for Anderson's theory of seeking love directly, so Frank Turner in Marching Men continued the thoughts of John Telfer in Windy McPherson's Son. Frank Turner, a barber who deserted his wife and four children because the compulsion to become a craftsman--a maker of fine violins--would not let him alone, is a clear-cut apology for Sherwood Anderson's own actions, an attempt by the author to justify the action of a man surrendering to the love of his craft and his own purpose in life despite the obli-

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70 Ibid., p. 55.

gations which family, society and convention had imposed upon him. And as Mike McCarthy sought to justify his actions, so did Anderson in Frank Turner's confession to Beaut McGregor. Frank Turner and his wife did not get along, just as Anderson and his first three wives did not get along, because of differences in interest and purposes of life. Frank Turner came home from his work in the evenings to listen to his wife brag of her work as a factory stenographer, dreaming all the while of quietitude and a chance to work on his violins. Anderson's first wife, the author wrote in his Memoirs, married one sort of man and had awakened to find she had got another. She had been unable to believe in him as an artist. Both Frank Turner and Sherwood Anderson escaped. "Some men are intended to work and take care of children and serve women perhaps," Anderson wrote in Marching Men, "but others have to keep trying for a vague something all their lives. . . If they don't get it it doesn't matter, they have to keep trying."[71] Frank Turner discoursed on women and love to young Beaut McGregor much as Jonn Telfer did to young Sam McPherson: "No woman," said Turner, his prototype, "really understands a man caring for anything but herself,"[72] and continues

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71 Marching Men, p. 94.

72 Ibid., p. 94.

Telfer's denunciation of women in a bitter speech; " . . . They work and scheme trying to get at men . . . They have no mercy . . . They wage war on us trying to make us slaves. They want to take us captive home to their houses as Caesar took captives home to Rome."[73] When Anderson admired anything, it had "order" and "purpose"; thus, when he wrote that there was something "messy and disorderly"[74] about Frank Turner's married life, the reader may be sure that the worst possible happening had come into the man's life. The harrassed barber felt himself being submerged; a purpose in life was being denied him; when he let himself go he dreamed not of duty to his family but of working undisturbed at his craft.

> "My woman was a good enough sort," he told Beaut. "I suppose loving is an art like writing a book or drawing pictures or making violins. People try to do it and don't succeed. In the end we throw the job up and just lived together like most people do. Our lives got messy and meaningless. That's how it was."[75]

Sherwood Anderson was to use the same story twenty-five years later to describe his own married life. In his Memoirs he stated that an artist must be true to himself

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73 Ibid., pp. 95-96.

74 Ibid., p. 87.

75 Ibid., p. 88.

and to his own vision of life, and that nothing must be allowed to stand in the way. Anderson's dream was of a race for a moment setting free something long submerged in themselves by singing thus out of one throat. "For that would I not give, freely and gladly, all hope of such things as a future life, duty to society, to wife, to family, to all the white man's shibboleths?"[76]

In Anderson's following novels, few of the marriages are successful. The marriage of Hugh McVey and Clara Butterworth of Poor White has already been treated in a previous section; John Webster's wife in Many Marriages had been a tall slender girl with yellow hair when he married her. "Now the impression she gave off was of one who had grown large without purpose, 'somewhat as cattle are fattened for slaughter', Webster thought." To John Webster, their marriage had been a persistent denial of love and the acceptance of beauty in life, and contrary to his newly-formed philosophy that "if you love in a loveless world you face others with the sin of not loving."[77] A

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76 Memoirs, p. 316. For Frank Turner's story, see Marching M pp. 83-98, passim. For parallels in Anderson's autobiography, see Memoirs, pp. 157, 161, 347, 397, etc.

77 Many Marriages, p. 75.

similar idea is expressed in Dark Laughter through Aline Grey, who for the same reason left her husband to run off with Bruce Dudley. Bruce had failed in his own marriage because he, like Frank Turner, had not been able to find a common ground of understanding and sympathy with his wife. Ethel Long in Beyond Desire had not the courage to marry Red Oliver, and finally got into a marriage with Tom Riddle, an older man, who "wanted a woman who would decorate his life. He wanted Ethel as he might have wanted a fine horse."[78] Kit Brandon married Gorden Halsey merely to further her own end in life, and the union quickly failed.

Anderson's philosophy of the failure of these marriages may be found summed up in his forward to Many Marriages, where he shook his head sadly to note that if one seeks love and goes toward it as directly as one is able, one is considered perhaps insane; further, that, to Anderson at least, it is sometimes better that a couple stop living in the same house if love is not present. The puzzle to Anderson was, however, that although "on that you would agree if you could but talk sanely on the matter, why are you unable to talk sanely?"

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78 Sherwood Anderson, Beyond Desire (New York: Liveright, Incorporated, 1932), p. 198.

The antithesis to this problem is found in Dark Laughter, in the successful union of Sponge Martin and his wife who, unlike many of Anderson's other characters who appear only in brief episodes, are integrated into the main plot and appear and reappear throughout the story. Sponge Martin had a kind of humbleness; he liked the skill of his own hands; that gave him something to rest on in life and his wife rested in him. They moved freely within a small but clear circle of life, going off on an occasional spree which they dignified by calling it "going fishing." Sponge Martin's wife was a tough wiry little thing, Anderson summed up, "and did not get tired of life--of Sponge her husband."[79]

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79 Dark Laughter, p. 116.

Because Anderson dealt with the subject of homosexuality only to a limited extent in his novels, it has not been included in an analysis of Anderson's treatment of the problem of love and marriage. He wrote briefly of the problem of love of man for man, which he stated was not fully explored. "It must be proclaimed as Walt Whitman proclaimed it," he declared in Memoirs; "Upon the understanding of it, the acceptance of it with pride, hangs the chance we males have of again getting, a little again, on top of our lives." (p. 383) "The whole thing," he continues, has nothing to do with a man's being, or not being, a fairy. I have always been afraid of fairies. They sell you out. They are, in some queer way, outside the life stream. They know it. The male love of the male is something else. It is something that must, some day, come back into the world." Because many of Anderson's ideas are similar to those of Walt Whitman, and because this fact has been noted by many

Conclusion

Anderson's theme--that love between two people, if felt, should be directly expressed--is of course not a new idea. The philosophy that man would be directly guided by the Spirit and that Church and State were no longer needed has existed since the death of Christ and the anticipation of His return to judge the world. One of the consequences of this philosophy was a rationalization of the institution of marriage; it was needed only because man was imperfect. "All the more extreme heretical mystics abolished marriage, declaring that the affections must be free and man should not restrict his love to a single person."[80] This ideal,

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critics, a brief study of the parallelisms in Anderson and Whitman has been included in this thesis as Appendix D, which includes a brief study of the treatment of homosexuality by both writers.

Anderson's studies of homosexuals include, of course, Kate Chancellor in Poor White; and Esther in Dark Laughter, another of Anderson's characters who made a marriage of convenience (see pp. 169, 202, 292); and more particularly in Beyond Desire with Doris and Grace; the young college professor who "might have been a trifle on the queer side . . . He always seemed about to caress Red with his hands" (p. 124); and Blanche, of whom Ethel wonders: "I could take her, make her live a little. I wonder if she wants me to. I guess she does. I guess that is what she is up to." (p. 143.)

80 Henry Bamford Parks, "Emerson", Hound and Horn, V (July-September, 1932), p. 598.

transplanted to America, found fruit in the Vermont perfectionists who, as late as the middle nineteenth century "made every male in their colony the husband of every female."[81] This doctrine, declared Henry Bamford Parks, found cautious favor even with Emerson, who concluded that

> The great and cresoive self, rooted in absolute nature, supplants all relative existence and ruins the kingdom of moral friendship and love. Marriage (in what is called the spiritual world) is impossible.. . . The universe is the bride of the soul. All private sympathy is partial.[82]

In this sense, then, Anderson was but a twentieth century follower of a centuries-old philosophy when he set down John Webster's thoughts in Many Marriages, his key book on the subject of love and marriage, that loving Natalie Swartz did not preclude the possibility of his loving another, perhaps many others. Anderson felt that the possibility of human relationships have not even been tapped yet, that something stood in the way of a sufficiently broad acceptance of life.[83]

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81 Loc. cit.

82 Loc. cit.

83 Many Marriages, p. 72.

For an excellent treatment of the problem of vice in cities, see Windy McPherson's Son, pp. 312-17.

C O N C L U S I O N

> My aim in this book is to tell another sort of story, the story of a mind groping, in the end perhaps reaching expression in art, of what then happens to the work of art itself, how it in turn must grope, trying to find its own life.[1]

IN HIS second book of poems, A New Testament (1927), Sherwood Anderson revealed as much of himself as he did in his autobiographies, and in two of the poems one can find the cause of his inarticulateness and helplessness when, viewing a problem, he could find no way of communicating his thoughts. "There is a story," he wrote; "I cannot tell it. I have no words. . . . Why was I not given words? Why was I not given a mind? Why am I dumb? I have a wonderful story to tell but know no way to tell it."[2] In a second poem he defined tales as "people who sit on the doorstep of the house of [his] mind," who "come to sit for a moment on the doorstep and then go away. . . . They murmur and cry out, they are dying of cold and hunger. I am a helpless man--my hands tremble."[3] In other poems he revealed

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1 Sherwood Anderson, Memoirs (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1942), p. 57.

2 Sherwood Anderson, A New Testament (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1927), pp. 56-59 passim.

3 A New Testament, pp. 63-64, passim.

that his notion was "one of escape,"[4] he showed his disgust for the ugly features of the machine age,[5] he flung out his challenge that life was sweet, that men might live, "that men in streets and cities might build temples to their souls."[6]

These are primary aims which Sherwood Anderson had used in his novels. In his treatment of the problem of profession and occupation, he has written a penetrating analysis of the effects of the rise of the industrial age, showing its effects in the rise of economic class distinction, the separation of "those who have and those who can't get it"; in his later novels he rose above his sentimental rebellion against industrialism and the plight of the vanishing craftsman to sing paeans of praise to the beauty of the machines. While recognizing the technical wonders of a new age, he was concerned also over the direction that American life was taking; power and industry had been seized and put to work for the benefit of the few with the complacent approval of the many; cheap standardization of materials and--even more dangerous--of thought, was becoming so prevalent that man was losing his ability to retain his man-

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4 "Ambition," A New Testament, p. 38.

5 In "Half Gods," A New Testament, p. 37.

6 In "The Man with a Trumpet," A New Testament, p. 23.

hood in the face of the modern way of utilizing the machine. His characters in Marching Men, Poor White, and Dark Laughter: Frank Turner, Joe Wainsworth and Hugh McVey, and Sponge Martin--all are testimonials of Anderson's idea that a man should stick to his craft, and in the latter two novels he attempted to show how man was being dominated by the machine, a purpose which was later more fully expressed in Puzzled America and which formed the central idea of Perhaps Women. Joe Wainsworth gave in to modern methods and was driven to murder and then suicide, Hugh McVey turned his back on his high-pressured business associates and achieved satisfaction in life, and Sponge Martin, perhaps the most well-rounded and integrated character in all of the novels, kept a serenity and balance that was the envy of Bruce Dudley, Fred Grey--and Sherwood Anderson.

"What remains that is articulate is simply my desire to express something to you out of the now, the present," Anderson wrote in A New Testament; but, he added, "As I cannot live in the present, stay in it, it is impossible that I should approach you. I am impotent."[7] He was impotent because he viewed American life as a whole and saw its deficiencies; but he attempted to remedy these deficiencies through individual characters, and, consequently,

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7 In "A Thinker," pp. 66 and 70.

failing to find answers, he could only retreat to wishful thoughts of a sweeter and more noble past.

Anderson intuitively sensed the loneliness, the isolation, that is a part of every human being, and in many scenes or sketches wrote with delicacy and sympathetic insight; his novels, however, when taken as a whole are shapeless, padded, rambling entities, his characters mouthing stilted and often absurd speeches, and his plots flowing along conventionalized channels in the tradition of the Victorian Age in American literature. Anderson wrote better when he was not trying to prove something by forcing his characters along certain paths; his best writing aside from some of his short stories may be found in the scattered scenes and incidents in his novels, the death of Nancy McGregor in Marching Men, for instance,[8] or his scathing attack on village women and gossipers in Windy McPherson's Son,[9] or his gentle touch and sensitivity in describing Clara Butterworth's approaching maturity in Poor White,[10] and many of his descriptions in Dark Laughter which at times are pure poetry.[11] Here Anderson was working by

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8 Pages 134-36.

9 Pages 111-113.

10 Pages 141, 147-157 passim. 168, etc.

11 Pages 16-17, 95-96, 100-101, 113, 121-22, 140, 178-80, 228, 231, 248, etc.

means of impressions rather than by actuality:

> I am a sea and a wind sweeps across the face of me. My words are little waves, thrust up. They are attempts to grasp, to lay hold of a passing thing. My words have, I well know, little to do with the actuality of you and of me.[12]

In preceding chapters, an attempt has been made to point out Sherwood Anderson's purpose in writing, a purpose which in part was an attempt to justify his own life, in part the fulfilment of an urge to express his feelings on occupation, social responsibility, love--problems with which he was vitally concerned and for which he sought answers. He did not succeed in finding these answers--if they can be found at all--just as he did not succeed in popularizing his novels. But in his defeat lay, paradoxically, his success, because he kept his integrity as a writer. "We Americans believe that life must have point and purpose," he wrote in 1917 in Marching Men. "We have called ourselves Christians but the sweet Christian philosophy of failure has been unknown among us. To say of one that he has failed is to take life and courage away . . . When the land was conquered, fear remained, the fear of failure. Deep in our American souls the wolves still howl."[13]

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12 A New Testament, p. 67.

13 Pages 343-44.

Anderson's central characters--Sam McPherson, Beaut McGregor, Hugh McVey, John Webster, Bruce Dudley, Red Oliver, and Kit Brandon--were failures if they are to be measured by any materialistic yardstick. But by these characters Anderson justified his failure first, as a business man; second, as a "popular" novelist. The desire for self-respect--Anderson's own cherished desire--is predominant in his novels: Windy McPherson's son and Beaut McGregor gave up fortunes and world-wide power for it and Red Oliver died for it. The theme is explicitly stated in the closing sentences of Marching Men as David Ormsby, the rich plowmaker, having seen Beaut McGregor's dream of a united world of marching men crumble, says of him and his chosen woman, an obscure and humble milliner:

> What if they, after looking deliberately along the road toward success in life, went without regret along the road to failure? What if McGregor and not myself knew the road to beauty?

Who, then, was really the victor?

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A P P E N D I X E S

APPENDIX A

Major works of Sherwood Anderson arranged chronologically

1916 *Windy McPherson's Son*. New York: John Lane Co. (Rev. ed., New York: B.W. Heubsch, Inc., 1922.)

1917 *Marching Men*. New York: John Lane Co.

1918 *Mid-American Chants*. New York: John Lane Co.

1919 *Winesburg, Ohio*. New York: The Modern Library. With an introduction by Ernest Boyd.

1920 *Poor White*. New York: B.W. Heubsch, Inc.
New York: The Modern Library.

1921 *Triumph of the Egg*: A book of impressions from American life in tales and poems. New York: B.W. Heubsch, Inc.

1923 *Many Marriages*. New York: B.W. Heubsch, Inc.

1923 *Horses and Men*: Tales long and short, from our American life. New York: B.W. Heubsch, Inc.

1924 *A Story Teller's Story*. New York: B.W. Heubsch, Inc.

1925 *Dark Laughter*. New York: Boni & Liveright.

1925 *The Modern Writer*. San Francisco: The Lantern Press.

1926 *Tar: A Midwest Childhood*. New York: Boni & Liveright.

1926 *Sherwood Anderson's Notebook*. New York: Boni & Liveright.

1927 *A New Testament*. New York: Boni & Liveright.

1929 *Hello Towns!* New York: Horace Liveright.

1931 *Perhaps Women*: A Record of thoughts, of feelings in the presence of something amazing in modern life--the machine. New York: H. Liveright, Inc.

1932 *Beyond Desire*. New York: H. Liveright, Inc.

1933 *Death in the Woods*. H. Liveright, Inc.

1934 *No Swank*: Impressions of well known persons. Philadelphia: The Centaur Press.

1935 *Puzzled America*. New York: C. Scribner's Sons.

1936 *Kit Brandon*: *A Portrait*. New York: C. Scribner's Sons.

1937 *Plays*: *Winesburg and Others*.

1940 *Home Town*: *The Face of America*. Alliance Book Co.

1942 *Memoirs*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co.

1947 *The Sherwood Anderson Reader*. Edited, with an introduction, by Paul Rosenfeld. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin Company.

APPENDIX B

Synopses of Plots in Sherwood Anderson's Novels

The novels of Sherwood Anderson which have been examined in this thesis include

1916 Windy McPherson's Son
1917 Marching Men
1920 Poor White
1923 Many Marriages
1925 Dark Laughter
1932 Beyond Desire
1936 Kit Brandon

Anderson's short stories, many of which have been collected in two books (Triumph of the Egg, 1921, and Horses and Men, 1923), and for which, along with his famous collection of grotesques in Winesburg, Ohio (1919), he is best known as a writer, have been used as additional references to supplement his four autobiographies: A Story Teller's Story (1924), Sherwood Anderson's Notebook (1926), Tar: A Midwest Childhood (1926), and Memoirs, published posthumously in 1942. In addition, a reading of his two books of free verse, Mid-American Chants (1918), and A New Testament (1927), serves to reveal an Anderson groping for a philosophy or a statement of life which is more penetrating than his self-conscious and more controlled autobiographies. His other works includes essays and sketches on Southern mill towns and the neighboring mountain people; midwest farming communities; and

articles on realism in writing. In summary, Anderson wrote ("romantically re-wrote", one critic has aptly stated) stories about his childhood and adolescence. He day-dreamed on paper and told himself stories about "strong men" and "purposeful women", as in his earlier novels he took his heroes through an adverse childhood to success and power in business, only to allow them to find that their mastery of their world flavorless and lacking the element necessary to make life complete. He dramatized, often sentimentally, stories or thoughts of warped and frustrated unfortunates whom modern life had left by the wayside. He tried to express the mystification of his feelings about ideals, sex, and the meaning of life--or baffled, he tried to make some character--equally as baffled--solve those problems for him. He described the physical background of contemporary America--the ugliness of city streets and architecture, the barrenness of village thought, all of which was reflected in the lives of men and women caught in the grip of an unfeeling, inartistic machine age; and he described the opportunities which a materialistic philosophy of life had allowed to remain unfulfilled.

Windy McPherson's Son, Anderson's first novel, is interesting to any researcher engaged in a study of this author, because it contains the basis for a good deal of

what is repeated in various forms in later works. Here is the first appearance of Anderson's pronouncements on big business, love, the small town, the big city, sex, the relation of man to society. In this novel Sherwood Anderson becomes Sam McPherson and searches the world over for "Truth". Briefly, the story is this: Sam McPherson is a hustling newsboy in Caxton, Ohio, whose ambition is to make money. His father, Windy McPherson--Anderson's own father is mirrored here-is a weak, ineffectual drunkard who lives in the memory of his Civil War episodes. Sam's mother dies of hardship and overwork, and the youth, hating the world, goes to Chicago, and by boldness and hard-headed shrewdness becomes virtual head of a huge firearms industry, branching out to become one of the most powerful business men in America. He marries his employer's daughter, but their marriage fails because she can't bear children and fulfill their idealistic vision of "noble parenthood." They part and he escapes to search the world in vain for happiness, "Truth" and a purpose in life. He finally adopts three children, hustles to his wife and his home with them, vaguely feeling that "This can be the beginning of a new life or merely the end of life."

Marching Men was written the following year. Here Anderson's hero, Norman (Beaut) McGregor, tries to bring order out of disorder in life with an idea of marching men--

of men shoulder to shoulder, feeling in the touch the rhythm of the mass and glorifying in being a part of it. The idea is that at a certain time their unified mass strength will be communicated to the captains of industry, who will become afraid. The story opens in the squalid mining town of Coal Creek. When he was eighteen, Beaut's mother, who ran a bakery shop, fell ill. "Beaut shook himself out of his waking stupor and went about seeking work. He had not felt himself indolent. He had been waiting." His mother dies from overwork. Beaut goes to Chicago where, like Sam McPherson, again by boldness and hard-headed shrewdness became a successful lawyer. He has his pick of jobs after a sensational defense of an innocently accused man in a murder trial, but turns down all offers to work on his idea of marching men. He captures the mass imagination of the working men, and organized marching clubs spring up everywhere, but the whipped-up emotionalism soon flattens. McGregor discovers love, not with the powerful industrialist's daughter, but with an obscure milliner when he discovered that she, too, had a purpose in life--the same purpose of "noble parenthood" found in the previous novel in Sam McPherson. The foregoing is, of course, but a bare outline of the exterior plot, on which Sherwood Anderson filled in his paddings of philosophy. In <u>Windy McPherson's Son</u> big Mike McCarthy and John Telfer were Anderson's

spokesmen for his philosophy of sex; in the second novel the same idea is repeated by Barber Frank Turner, and, like Sam McPherson, Beaut McGregor discoursed on the small town, the big city, love, business, and man's duty to society.

Poor White is Anderson's third novel of a boy's rise from intellectual as well as material poverty. It is also the chronicle of the birth of the industrial age epitomized in the metamorphosis of an agricultural village into a factory town. Hugh McVey, born in the miserable town of Mudcat Landing, like Beaut McGregor, woke himself from his stupor; the rest of this element of the plot concerns his efforts to improve himself, his success as an inventor of labor-saving machinery, his marriage to Clara Butterworth--whose search for love occupies much of the middle portion of the book--and McVey's conquest of his inarticulateness and escape from the dominance of the machine age. The other main element of the plot concerns the rising influence of the machine and factory in the little town of Bidwell and their effect on the inhabitants.

Many Marriages is a book in which Anderson tried to set down his ideas on sexual inhibition and what he believed to be the hypocrisy of society on the subject of sex. As he showed the effects of repression in Winesburg, Ohio, so he continued his theme in this, an expanded short story. The outward plot is constructed almost entirely as a mono-

logue of a man's efforts to explain to his daughter why he is leaving his wife and his attempts to make his daughter understand that one, to be truly moral, must be absolutely sexually sincere as well.

Dark Laughter is a continuation of Anderson's theme that marriage without love is hypocrisy and moral adultery. His central character, Bruce Dudley, who runs away from his wife and newspaper job in Chicago in search of something or some one to quiet the cravings of his soul, finds a job in his home town as a painter of carriage wheels in a small factory, falls in love with his employer's wife, and through a chain of circumstances elopes with her after they had played at a game of love under the eyes of her husband, who refused to see what he did not wish to see. The story concerns also the unsuccessful marriage of the employer and his wife which began in a background of Paris at the conclusion of the first World War. Aline Grey's search for love is much like that of Clara Butterworth's in Poor White. Whereas Many Marriages is an almost uninterrupted monologue of nearly three hundred pages, Dark Laughter, Anderson's most commercially successful venture, is a book full of poetry and music in the background, of Bruce Dudley's search for Truth and a purpose in life.

Beyond Desire is a collection of four long short stories in which the central character, like George Willard

in Winesburg, Ohio, is the connecting link. The central theme is, as it is in Poor White, the shaking up of social conditions of a small Southern town by the coming of industrialization. As Bidwell, Ohio, was changed by the coming of the farm machinery factory, so Langdon, Georgia, was changed by the coming of the cotton mills. Anderson's main character, Red Oliver, is bewildered, like his predecessors, by mental perplexities on the subject of sex and a purpose in life. Three times Red Oliver had failed to live up to an ideal: once when he had gone back on his fellow workers in the mill, once when he had kept quiet about seven dollars he had in his pocket when he was with a group of migrant bums who were dividing their pennies and nickels among the group, and once when he had tried to creep away from a communist camp which he had joined--not because he believed in communism, but because he felt the need of contributing his share toward improving working conditions in the factories. When, with the group, he is halted at a bridge, he felt it his duty to protest. "There was that queer feeling again . . . he had tried to go away . . . he couldn't . . . 'I am one of them and not of them... . . . it's the struggle of all men...it has come...it is inevitable. It is..it isn't." With these thoughts churning through his mind, Red Oliver advances across the bridge and is shot to death at the order of his friend, a captain of

the militia ordered to break up the strike. Ethel Long in this story is another Clara Butterworth or Aline Grey in her search for love and the resolving of her perplexities and frustration. Here, too, Anderson writes of the beauty and power of the modern machine, in contrast to his earlier attitude, but warns that man must measure up to the ability of the machine if he is to be saved.

Kit Brandon, Anderson's last novel, continues his protest on behalf of the Southern mill workers, not for better living conditions, necessarily, but emphatically for a better way of life: "The old stupidity, refusal to give the lives of the workers the dignity that might make the revolutionized world, going on and on." It is Anderson's plea again for sincerity in relations with self and others. Kit Brandon, a mountain girl who goes to work in a cotton mill, later joins a gang of rum runners as a driver and lookout. Legally, they are on the wrong side of the law, but they serve the interests of the very people who profess most to condemn them. Anderson indicts again the complacency of citizens who while professing to follow the spiritual life practice the material life, in the story of the Weathersmythe family and the "F.F.Vs."

APPENDIX C

Anderson's Rebellion Against the Industrial Age as Shown in Selected Quotations from each of his Novels.

In each of his novels Anderson has shown that one of the results of the industrial age has been power misdirected; he shows the hideousness of architecture in the cities which is matched by the hideousness of the lives of people living in them.

Chicago, to Beaut McGregor in Marching Men, was an even worse place than grimy unsightly Coal Creek: "The street in which McGregor lived in Chicago . . . was complete in its hideousness. Nothing more unlovely could be imagined."[1] Not only does Anderson again indict the lack of beauty and purpose of the city itself, but also he compares its citizens to those of Coal Creek when he writes of the city dwellers:

> At a corner saloon teamsters stopped to have their drinking cans filled with beer and stood about swearing and shouting. In the evening women and children went back and forth from their houses carrying beer in pitchers from the same saloon. Dogs howled and fought, drunken men reeled along the sidewalk and the women of the town appeared in their cheap finery and paraded before the idlers about the saloon door.[2]

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1 Marching Men, p. 76.

2 Loc. cit. See also p. 75 and pp. 156-57.

It is a theme which Anderson is to repeat again and again.

In Poor White he uses it in the form of an allegory:

> . . .Modern men and women who live in industrial cities are like mice that have come out of the fields to live in houses that do not belong to them. They live within the dark walls of the houses where only a dim light penetrates, and so many have come that they grow thin and haggard with the constant toil of getting food and warmth . . .[3]
>
> . . . . . .
>
> "It was a time of hideous architecture," [he writes again,] "a time when thought and learning paused. Without music, without poetry, without beauty in their lives or impulses, a whole people, full of the native energy and strength of lives in a new land, rushed pell-mell into a new age.[4]

In Many Marriages, he says, in the person of John Webster:

> Why is it that so many houses along the street were ugly? Were people unaware? Could any one be quite completely unaware? Could one wear ugly commonplace clothes, live always in an ugly or commonplace street of a commonplace town and remain always unaware?[5]

And again he states:

> How few men in America ever really thought of the houses they lived in, of the clothes they wore. Men were willing to go through a long life without any effort to decorate their bodies, to make lovely and full of meaning the dwellings in which they lived.[6]

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3 Page 114.

4 Page 130. See pp. 130-133, passim, for a contrast of Anderson's views of the sweetness of the rural age.

5 Page 35.

6 Page 26.

In Dark Laughter he yearns for the romance of the past as much as he deplores the emptiness of life in the city:

> The factory men were pretty smart, weren't they? First thing they did when they got the chance was to choke off the [Mississippi] river, take the romance out of commerce. They may not have intended anything of the sort, romance and commerce were just natural enemies. They made the river as dead as a door-nail with their railroads and it has been that way ever since.[7]

Of Chicago, Anderson's description in Dark Laughter follows a familiar line found in his first two novels:

> In Chicago and in other cities he had visited the people were all inclined to have that tired, bored look on their faces when you caught them off guard . . . Downtown, in the Loop, during the day, people went along thinking of getting across the next street crossing. The crossing policeman was about to blow his whistle. They ran, little herds of them, like flocks of quails, escaping with their lives most of them. When they had got to the sidewalk on the other side a look of triumph.[8]

In Beyond Desire, Anderson found that the industrial age was creeping into the South, bringing the same problems which had affected the North and the Midwest:

> The old South was dead, but it certainly hadn't died a princely death. Once it had a profound, a princely contempt for the Northern shop-keepers, money-changers, factory-owners, but now it was itself all eager for factories, for money, for shop-keeping. Hating and imitating. Muddled for sure.[9]

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7 Page 18.

8 Page 41.

9 Page 111.

In Anderson's last novel, Kit Brandon, the girl Kit goes to work in a mill village which seems to her "a very lovely place," but Anderson, to whom the girl is telling the story, adds

> The thing that had offended me in my studies of such places, what I had thought the deadly sameness of the little houses, all painted the same color, little flower beds before the doors of many houses, all alike, all of this in no way offended her.[10]

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10 Pages 55-56.

APPENDIX D

Parallelisms in Walt Whitman and Sherwood Anderson

While it is granted that imitators of Walt Whitman's style of poetry have been unsuccessful, a reader of the two books of Sherwood Anderson's verse cannot help but be struck by the similarity in tone and style to Whitman, a fact which has been noted by many modern critics.[1]

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1 Consider: ". . .if we think of style rather than content, it is hard to say just whom Whitman has affected fruitfully. As a warming and sustaining voice he has heartened artists of many kinds, Louis Sullivan and the painting group around Robert Henri. E.A. Robinson as well as Sherwood Anderson. He has helped them to break through the aridity of our academic culture to handle life with passion."--F.O. Matthiessen, American Renaissance, p. 592.

"In Mid-American Chants (1918) a book of verse . . . (smelling powerfully of Sandburg and Whitman), Anderson has told in poetry . . . (etc.) --Harry Hartwick, The Foreground of American Fiction, p. 120.

"His [Anderson's] early work owes a great deal to Dreiser's novels and to Whitman's feelings about America." --Cleveland B. Chase, Sherwood Anderson, p. 83.

Emory Holloway, in Whitman: An Interpretation in Narrative, in discussing Whitman's "Song of the Open Road", writes: "The very symbolism confesses the poet's inability to deal with so broad and elusive a theme except by suggestion. He concludes, like some modern David Grayson or Sherwood Anderson, or some classic Emerson . . ." (etc.) pp. 149-50.

"Anderson is a true mystic. . . . His mysticism is most like that of Whitman . . ." --Russell Blankenship, American Literature, p. 666. (Blankenship goes on to point

Walt Whitman was born out of his age; he was the creator of verse the content of which was in advance of the accepted standards of the mid-nineteenth century and after; he was an advocate of the brotherhood of nations at a time when insular nationality and isolation from the world was to remain a dominant force in American thinking almost until 1917; he was in his personal conduct with men and women a non-conformist to the established moral and social code of his day; he was a transcendental mystic. Sherwood Anderson was also born out of his age;[2] likewise, he was the creater particularly of prose thought which was the harbinger of a new era in literature, the rise of naturalism, Freudianism, and the psychological novel; and the emancipation of sex in America. He too was an advocate of the brotherhood of man; he too pleaded with an indifferent public

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out different qualities of mysticism in the two; the quotation is taken out of context here.)

"The fact that Whitman has no imitators or 'disciples' (like Horace Traubel or Edward Carpenter) does not mean that his examples of literary pioneering and his democratic ideas have not permeated the heart and spirit of writers like Sherwood Anderson and Thomas Wolf [sic] , to mention only two. --Gay W. Allen, Walt Whitman Handbook, p. 537.

"[Anderson] stems . . . from Whitman . . ." --Hamilton Basso, in The New Yorker, XXIII (November 15, 1947), p. 118.

2 Anderson's anguished protests against the inroads of the industrial age on culture and "a sweeter way of life" indicates that he might have been happier living in the time of Whitman's youth.

for the recognition of the love of man for man and, like Whitman, much of his writing was wrapped in mysticism, particularly in sexual symbolism ("The door", "The house", "The well", etc.) Leaves of Grass sold poorly in 1855; the public which the author was trying to reach did not accept it. Winesburg, Ohio, met with a similar reception in 1919.

Whitman's poetry was almost prose in rhythm, and his rhythm was a protest against the usual meters, which he called "lulling piano tunes". He discarded the meticulous counting of syllables and freed his poems from such arbritrary confinement by trying to regulate his rhythm by the interval of elapsed time between stresses, a device which has been called "period rhythm":

> Once the period or interval in such a line has been established the words beat their own time for the verse and establish not only the pattern, but the logical and emotional subleties which the poet intended. . . . The poet can convey his complete meaning only by his rhythm.

"Whitman wrote invariably, at his best, in this non-syllabic meter."[3] Anderson also wrote his poetry in non-syllabic meter. His content was similar to Whitman's when he identified himself with the world, with the earth, when he sang

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3 Soulley Bradley, "The Fundamental Metric Principle in Whitman's Poetry," American Literature, X (January, 1939), p. 444. Bradley's study gives excellent examples of Whitman's use of "period rhythm".

the song of the wheat fields surrounding Chicago, when he identified himself with all the people of the world and sought to embrace them in himself.

In comparing Anderson's technique with Whitman's, an example of the former's style is taken at random: the first three stanzas of "Song of the Mating Time":

3 Out of the cornfields at daybreak,
5 Ready to run through the dawn to the place of beginning,
4 Creeping, I come, out of the corn,
6 Wet with the juice of bruised corn leaves--out of the corn I come.

4 Eager to kiss the fingers of queens,
3 Eager to stand with kings,
4 To breed my kind and stand with kings.

3 Out of the corn at daybreak,
2 Brother to dogs,
4 Big brother to creeping, crawling things,
6 Stretched full length on the long wet grass at the edge of the cornfields,
1 Waiting,
4 Here I lie through the day, waiting and waiting.[4]
. . . . . .

One notes, first, that the title is indicative of some of Whitman's works--of Whitman the poet of fecundity, of amativeness. In placing "Song of the Mating Time" against Whitman's "Tears, Tears, Tears", one is struck by the calculated framework which the latter used, and the evident formless structure of Anderson's poem.[5] Bradley notes that "Tears" might be likened to a large wave or breaker with three crests:

> The first section of five lines, in which the rain in the night is likened to tears, announces the pyramid in the swell and fall through lines of 3, 3, 5, 5, and 3 stress; in the second, in which the spirit of the world broods over the night, the initial impulse is paralleled more grandly in the succession of 5, 6, and 5 stress; in the final section, in which the identity of an individual weeper merges with the cosmic woe of nature itself, the full rhythmic diapason is unloosed in the great cloudhead, or crest, of 6, 6, 8, 7, 3 stresses.[6]

There seems to be no justification for Anderson's scheme of 3, 5, 4, 6 / 4, 3, 4 / 3, 2, 4, 6, 1, 4 stress. One must look elsewhere to find a clue, and finds it in the writer's use of assonance, alliteration, and repetition, all favorite devices of Whitman.

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5 Anderson's later book of poems, A New Testament, approaches even closer to prose than either his first book or Leaves of Grass.

6 American Literature, pp. 448-49. Bradley may have been influenced by a reading of Bliss Perry's life of Walt Whitman, for the latter mentions the "wave-like" effects and calculated pyramidal rhythms of the poet.

Consider line two of Anderson's poem:

"Ready to run through the dawn to the place of beginning." Assonance is evident in to, through, to;
Run, the, the, of.

Alliteration is found in "ready to run," and the whole line of five beats has a measured, lilting swing in keeping with the tone of the idea, much as Whitman conveyed "the complete meaning only by his rhythm." Line three is alliterative:

Creeping, I come, out of the corn,

and line four employs all three forms of assonance, alliteration, and repetition:

Wet with the juice of bruised corn leaves--out of the corn I come.

Assonance: juice - bruised

Repetition: Corn - corn, and inverted repetition of the last phrase of the preceding line: (I come, out of the corn) into out of the corn I come.

The alliteration in this line is obvious.

The second stanza is reminiscent of the arrogance and independence of Whitman's earlier poems, of the Whitman who took off his hat to no man. Epanaphora, or initial repetition, is employed in these three lines, and gives a rhythmic effect much as it did in the earlier poet's works. Epanalepsis (the use of one word or phrase two or more times) is also made use of in this example.

Whitman felt the power and beauty of words, and his work is marked by a continual reshaping and refitting of lines of verse. A reader senses Whitman's love for the sound of words as well; often his lines are in the style of Poe (although Whitman of the Leaves of Grass period was no imitator, of course) in that the power and beauty of the words originate in their sounds rather than in the ideas they convey. An example of this is:

> The red aborigines,
> Leaving natural breaths, sounds of rain and winds,
> call as of birds and animals in the woods,
> syllabled to us for names,
> Okonee, Koosa, Ottawa, Monongahela, Sauk, Natchez,
> Chattahoochee, Kaqueta, Oronoco,
> Wabash, Miami, Saginaw, Chippewa, Oshkosh, Walla-Walla,
> Leaving such to the States they melt, they depart,
> charging the water and the land with names.[7]

Sherwood Anderson had the same love for words. He was influenced by Gertrude Stein, who in turn admired Anderson's style of writing and hailed him as the leader of a new school. She once declared that he was the only American who could write a decent sentence. Anderson did not "write" words; he "became pregnant" and gave birth to them. He treated his words as if they were children, with tender care; at times he was a little afraid of them: "They were such tricky, elusive things."[8] Anderson was also, like

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7 "Starting from Paumonok," Sec. 16.

8 Dark Laughter, p. 25.

Whitman, a "cataloguer", as seen in these lines from his poem, "Ambition":

> I have been lying at full length in Illinois.
> I have put my hands into Iowa, into Kentucky,
> into Indiana, Kansas, Ohio, Nebraska, the
> Dakotas.[9]

One of the most obvious traits that both poets share is a determination to strip prudery and fear from the mention sex. Whitman, according to Gay W. Allen, thought that "nothing is indecent to nature; therefore it is not to her spokesman."[10] Consequently, he could write such lines as

> Through me forbidden voices,
> Voices of sexes and lusts, voices veil'd and I
> remove the veil,
> Voices indecent by me clarified and transfigured.[11]

One of Sherwood Anderson's foremost aims in writing was similar; perhaps as much as any modern American writer he has been called sex-obsessed, just as Whitman was so labelled in his day. The value of Anderson to his period lies in the fact that he encouraged others to rebel against the Puritan denial of sexual experience at a time when it would have been easier to ignore it. Anderson, however, was

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9 A New Testament, p. 39.

10 Walt Whitman Handbook, p. 297.

11 From "Song of Myself," Sec. 42.

contemptuous of the attitude of Mark Twain, William Dean Howells, and Nathaniel Hawthorne who, knowing what an influence sex is on lives, were, he said, afraid to recognize its importance. "What about conversations in everyday life," Anderson asked. ". . . Why hesitate to put down whatever is in men's and women's lives, making the picture whole?"[12]

Whitman's story of the twenty-ninth bather in "Song of Myself" is a distinct forerunner of the Freudian type of psychology later developed in America by Anderson and others. Written at least three decades before Freud originated his psychoanalytic experiments, the theme of the story of the frustrated woman watching the young men bathing is duplicated in many of the short stories and poems of Sherwood Anderson, and may be compared with a story in Winesburg, Ohio, where in the story "The Strength of God", the Reverend Curtis Hartman spies through his church office window into the bedroom of a naked woman.

Whitman has been called a transcendental mystic; some of his poetry reveals that "vague or dreamlike quality that comes and goes;" other verses are clothed in symbols,

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12 Memoirs, p. 213.

sometimes sexual symbols, of which one of the best-known quotations is from "Song of Myself":

> Press close bare-bosomed night--press close magnetic nourishing night!
> Night of south winds--night of the large few stars!
> Still nodding night--mad naked summer night.[13]

. . . . . .

Typical of the mystic, says Allen, are the resultant convictions of equality with God, the brotherhood with all people and love as the foundation of the whole universal creation. In Section Five of "Song of Myself" beginning with

> I believe in you my soul, the other I am must not abase itself to you,
> And you must not be abased to the other . . . .

is an example of mystical experience between "Me" and the "Soul" which gives the poet his convictions.

A different kind of mysticism is implicit in the poems of Sherwood Anderson; his songs seem mostly ones of escape, of bewilderment, of hatred for a mechanically-minded age which has denied life and beauty to men and women:

> I am one who has walked out of a tall building into the streets of a city and over plains into a forest that fringes a river. My notion is one of escape . . .
>
> It is only by going about in secret I can stumble into the pathway of truth . . .[14]

. . . . . .

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13 Section 21.

> The noises of the world are tremendous.
> The walls of the cities throb.
> There is a new song stuck in the brazen throats of the cities.
> There is an American song.
> There is a song nobody knows.
>
> There is a child born of an engine in a bed of stone. American cities are pregnant.
> You understand what I mean. My insanity is crystal-clear to you as you sit in the chair of stone. To you my insanity is a white streak of moonlight that falls across the smoke-begrimed streets of your city . . .[15]

Both Whitman and Anderson identified themselves with the world:

> Walt Whitman, a kosmos . . .
>
> . . . . . .
>
> I find I incorporate gneiss, coal, long-threaded moss, fruits, grains, esculent roots, and am stuccoed with quadrupeds and birds all over . . .[16]

And Sherwood Anderson's identification of himself as

> Brother to dogs,
> Big brother to creeping, crawling things . . .

Both poets loved and wrote of the "common man"; Whitman identified himself with them: "I am the hounded slave," "I am the mash'd fireman," etc. Anderson declared repeatedly that he wrote "little tales of people, of things seen and heard"; he had been a newsboy, roustabout, stevedore, bum.

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15 Ibid., pp. 14-15

16 "Song of Myself," Sec. 31.

When his writing grew stale he felt that he had lost touch with the "common people" and he recharged his brain by sitting in waterfront bars; he talked to farmers in the fields, to Southern poor whites, mill workers, laborers--any one who would listen. And he wrote about them.

Whitman has often been called homosexual; the inference comes from his Calamus poems and some of his letters. A strong suggestion is found in "What Think You I Take my Pen in Hand?", which tells of Whitman's noting

> . . .merely of two simple men I saw to-day on the pier in the midst of the crowd, parting the parting of dear friends,
> The one to remain hung on the other's neck and passionately kiss'd him,
> While the one to depart tightly prest the one to remain in his arms.[17]

But Whitman had a bigger conception of man's love for man, a conception which may be summed up in the inclusive word 'Brotherhood,' a phrase which Anderson was to take up three-quarters of a century later. Anderson was both sensuous and sensual; he loved the feel of fine cloth; in his younger days he liked to dress well; he liked the sight of beautiful women dressed in furs; he liked the companionship of men. And Anderson had a real affection for two or three men during his lifetime, a deep affection which he called love.

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17 In Leaves of Grass, from the "Calamus Poems."

The problem of the love of man for man was not fully explored, Anderson declared, saying that "There must have been something, perhaps, a kind of warm male comradeship in life sought. I had already read Whitman . . ."[18] Later, in his Memoirs, published shortly after his death in 1941, he developed this theme, the basis of which he had received from Walt Whitman:

> Why is it that men, as males, constantly deny their greatest inheritance, the love of the male for the male? The love of man for woman is a different matter. The two possessions are not alike. The whole thing has nothing to do with a man's being, or not being, a fairy.
>
> I have always been afraid of fairies. They sell you out. They are, in some queer way, outside the life stream. They know it. The male love of the male is something else. It is something that must, some day, come back into the world.
>
> It must be proclaimed as Walt Whitman proclaimed it. Upon the understanding of it, the acceptance of it with pride, hangs the chance we males have of, again getting, a little again, on top of our lives.[19]

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18 Memoirs, p. 157.

19 Ibid., p. 383.

APPENDIX E

Bibliographic Checklist

(1) Checklists of the writings of Sherwood Anderson.

(2) Criticisms of the writings of Sherwood Anderson: books, chapters or essays in books, periodicals, and brief mention in books.

(3) Background studies in American Literature, 1900-1948: Psychology in relation to the writings of Sherwood Anderson; studies on the American novel, criticism in general, Puritanism, and the intellectual and social milieu of the United States in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The checklist on the following pages has been compiled as an aid for further study of Sherwood Anderson. Some of it has been compiled from other checklists, which are listed on the following page, so that only those items starred (*) have been read or examined. The listings are, of course, by no means exhaustive or complete.

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